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REVELATION TWENTY



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REVELATION TWENTY

An Exposition

by

J. MARCELLUS KIK

Author of *Matthew Twenty-four*

*"And he laid hold on the dragon . . . and bound
him a thousand years"*

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This book is affectionately dedicated to
MR. AND MRS. GARRET VANDER MAY
beloved and loyal members of the
Second Reformed Church of Little Falls, N. J.

FOREWORD

What about the Millennium? Will it be in history and upon the earth? Or will it occur after the second coming of Christ? Or is it descriptive of heaven? The answer to these questions surely should be sought for in Revelation Twenty in which the thousand-year period is mentioned six times. This Chapter is very important for the true conception of the Millennium.

The question of whether or not the earth will be the scene of the Millennium is coming more and more to the fore among Christians. Will all nations be converted to Christianity before the second coming of the Lord? Is history rapidly drawing to a close as predicted by some? Is there any possibility that nations will beat their swords into plowshares and spears into pruninghooks before the end of time?

While all the answers are not given in Revelation Twenty yet evangelical scholars have acknowledged that they have been influenced in their attitude towards prophecy by their interpretation of the Chapter. Many have entered into certain schools of thought because of what they felt this prophetic Chapter teaches. It is therefore very important to ascertain the true teaching of Revelation Twenty.

It is the habit of a few to read a few chapters of a book on prophecy to see to which school of thought the author belongs. Then if it does not agree with his particular school it is cast aside and condemned. It is my hope that the reader will not use the norm of any particular school of prophecy but will use the Scriptures. Does the Word of God teach this or does it not? The author does not feel any responsibility to any particular school of prophecy but he does feel his responsibility to interpret the Word of God correctly. I will feel grateful for any correction of error in interpretation.

While I have quoted from but few writers on the interpretation of Revelation, it is not because they have not been consulted. I owe a debt of gratitude to many who have enriched the Church with their writings. Among such are: Warfield, the Hodges, J. A.

Alexander, Vos, Lange, P. W. Grant, Alford, Hengstenberg, Garratt, Chr. Wordsworth, Moses Stuart, H. B. Swete, James Durham, Gauntlett, Bryce Johnstone, Alexander McLeod, Waldegrave, Fuller, Milligan, John Owen, John Lightfoot, Goodwin, Henry Gipps, Plummer, Thomas Newton. I have also consulted a number of recent writers on prophecy.

For the amillennialist position on the first resurrection I have taken as authorities Dr. Geerhardus Vos in his article on Eschatology in "The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia" and Dr. L. Berkhof in the Second Revised Edition of his "Systematic Theology." A few, who classify themselves as amillennialists, do not accept the position of these authorities.

With the exception of several chapters, I have used the method of verse by verse exposition. The first two chapters, however, concern themselves with the two resurrections.

J.M.K.

Little Falls, N. J.

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REVELATION TWENTY

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST RESURRECTION

The Book of Revelation is a sealed book to many. It puzzles and baffles the reader. Because of this many avoid the reading of it as it makes no sense to them. And yet a blessing is promised to all those who hear and read this mysterious book. The Lord knew that Revelation would be difficult to understand and therefore graciously encourages the reader with a special blessing. In the very first chapter Jesus states that a blessing will attend the reading and hearing of the words of Revelation. This promise alone should cause every Christian to read and study it diligently. Where there is a promise of blessing the Lord will give light.

Of all the chapters of Revelation there is none considered more difficult than Chapter Twenty. It concerns itself with a thousand-year period which is called the millennium. This is associated in our minds with a period of peace and prosperity. It is called the golden age. Concerning the millennium there are three schools of thought. Within each school there are wide differences of opinion and interpretation. These schools of thought are called premillennial, amillennial, and postmillennial.

The premillennialist believes that the millennium will be ushered in after the second coming of Christ. The amillennialist believes that there will not be a millennium upon earth and that the thousand-year period refers to the intermediate state of the Christian soul in heaven. The postmillennialist believes that the thousand-year period is before the second coming of the Lord.

Without going fully into the merits and demerits of these various schools of thought, all held by able evangelical scholars, we will endeavour to give a verse by verse interpretation of this important Chapter. But before doing so it may be well to clear up a few matters which will help in the understanding of the entire Chapter. We feel that the apostle John through the Holy Spirit has given a key which will unlock the meaning of the Chapter. The key is given to us in verse 5. It is the expression: *This is the first resurrection.*

It is verse 4 that is most difficult to understand. It seems like a picture of a different type of life than that which is experienced at this present time upon earth. It pictures saints seated upon thrones, living and reigning with Christ a thousand years. The premillennialist says: "This must be upon earth and after the second coming of Christ. They must be resurrected saints reigning with the Lord upon earth." "No," says the amillennialist, "it must be the intermediate state in heaven because it speaks of souls." But the apostle John, the author of Revelation, states definitely: "This is the first resurrection."

The apostle John wanted no misunderstanding. He did not want anyone to think that verse 4 had reference to the General Resurrection and the period following. He halts us from such a thought by abruptly stating: "This is the first resurrection." If we can determine by Scripture what the first resurrection is, we will go a long way in the understanding of the entire Chapter. It is the key which will unlock the door.

All are acquainted with the simple meaning of the word *resurrection*. It is: "a rising again from the dead." That which was dead is brought to life again. This is very important to keep in mind. Whatever the term "first" may signify, the word "resurrection" means a rising again from the dead.

The fact that it is a resurrection knocks out the thought that it is descriptive of the life of the soul in the intermediate state. It has been maintained that when the soul leaves the body at death it enters into the millennial state and lives and reigns with Christ for a thousand years. But when the Christian soul leaves the body to dwell in heaven, it is not a *resurrection*. The soul in the Christian is alive; it is not in a dead state. Its removal from the body into heaven could be better termed an ascension or a translation. To state that the translation of the soul into heaven is a resurrection is to contradict directly the teaching of Christ that "whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." The very fact that this Twentieth Chapter deals with a resurrection knocks out the whole amillennial interpretation that the Chapter is speaking of the intermediate state of the soul. Whatever Chapter Twenty describes, it is a raising from the dead and not a translation from earth to heaven.

But what is the *first resurrection* if it is not the translation of the soul to heaven? The best way to determine what is defined by the term "first resurrection" is to discover what is the "first death." What needs to be resurrected first?

THE FIRST DEATH

The first death is described to us in the first chapters of Genesis. God stated to Adam in Genesis 2:17, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." The primary meaning of the expression, "Thou shalt surely die," is the death of the soul. Upon the act of disobedience the soul was separated from God. Adam and Eve upon disobedience did not immediately experience physical death but they did experience the death of the soul. They were separated from God. Included in the death of the soul was the death of the body which came later. However, the fundamental fulfilment of Genesis 2:17 was the death of the soul.

This is brought out strongly in the New Testament. The apostle Paul describes the state of the Ephesian Christians before conversion as those "who were dead in trespasses and sins." In I Timothy 5:6 it is declared: "But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." Christ brings this sharply before us in His statement of Matthew 8:22, "Let the dead bury their dead." Even though the unregenerated man is physically alive he is dead in the sight of God. His soul is dead. This is the primary death. Involved in it and following from it is the death of the body.

Since the first death is primarily the death of the human soul, it is the soul that must be resurrected *first*. Consequently we must expect to find in the New Testament references to the resurrection of the soul. This we find in abundance.

THE FIRST RESURRECTION

An important passage is Ephesians 2:5, 6 which reads as follows: "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved;), and hath raised us up together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." The word "quickened" is translated in the American Revised Version as "made

alive." The soul which was dead has been made alive. It has been resurrected. This is brought out even more clearly with the expression: "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." "To raise up" is to resurrect. Even while upon earth the resurrected saints sit with Christ in heavenly places. This points to the interpretation of verse 4. However, just now we are interested in pointing out that the first resurrection, as far as Christians are concerned, is the quickening of their souls from death.

Colossians 2:12, 13 teaches the same truth. It reads: "Having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, being dead through your trespasses and uncircumcision of your flesh, you, I say, did he make alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses." Here the regeneration of the human soul is compared to the resurrection of Christ. They who were dead were made alive. They were raised with Christ. This is the first resurrection and surely the important one as far as the Christian is concerned. Ephesians 1:19, 20 brings out the fact that the same mighty power of God that was used to resurrect Christ was used in respect to the soul of the believer.

Another passage which brings out this same truth is I John 3:14, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Each Christian can be assured that he has experienced the resurrection by one of the fruits thereof, namely, love for the brethren. It is a passing from death to life. That is the meaning of the word "resurrection."

The above verses clearly indicate that the rebirth of the soul is the first resurrection. The verses speak of "being made alive," "being raised," and "passing from death to life." This resurrection is the experience of believers upon earth. Surely it cannot be denied that it is a resurrection and actually the first resurrection in the experience of the Christian.

If the apostle John in Chapter Twenty of Revelation was not referring to the resurrection of the soul why would he use the term "first"? In his Gospel and Epistle he himself points to the resurrection experience of the soul. Certainly there would be confusion in the minds of his readers if in Chapter Twenty he referred to

something entirely different. They would say in effect: "The apostle speaks of the rebirth of the soul upon earth as the first resurrection experience of the Christian; but in Revelation he speaks of the translation of the soul to heaven as the first resurrection or he speaks of what is to happen at 'one phase' of the second coming as the first resurrection. Why did he not use some other term than *first*?" Undoubtedly if the apostle John was referring to another resurrection he would have used another term. However, by using the term "first resurrection" he was pointing to the well-known fact of the resurrection of the soul.

THE SECOND RESURRECTION

It may be well at this point to ask, What is the second resurrection? It is the resurrection of the body which is to take place at the second coming of Christ. This is the General Resurrection with which readers of the Bible are well acquainted. There are many references to it in the Scriptures. As a rule when one speaks of the resurrection people have that in mind. To indicate that the General Resurrection was not the one he had in mind the apostle John expressly used the term "first" so that there would be no confusion.

That there is to be a resurrection of the body as well as that of the soul is clearly taught in the Scriptures. In the Old Testament we have the classic passage of Job 19:26, "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." And in Isaiah 26:19 we read: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." Notice how in Daniel 12:2 it speaks of the resurrection of both the wicked and the righteous: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

The New Testament also teaches clearly the resurrection of the body. Romans 8:11 states: "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." Our mortal bodies are to be made alive. The resurrection of the body is particularly dealt with in the fif-

teenth chapter of First Corinthians. There it is taught that as Christ was raised so will every believer be raised. Paul answers the objections that have been raised against the resurrection of the body.

The resurrection of the body will take place at the second coming of our Lord. In I Corinthians 15:23 it is stated: "But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." That the wicked are also included in this resurrection is taught in Acts 24:15, "And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust." An important passage is John 5:21-29 with which we will deal in the next chapter. It speaks of two resurrections. Verses 28, 29 bring to the foreground the General Resurrection: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

It is thus apparent that the Scriptures speak of two resurrections: that of the soul and that of the body. The resurrection of the soul is first. Unbelievers have no part in the first resurrection. The General Resurrection will witness the rising of all from the grave. We believe that it was to avoid any misunderstanding as to which resurrection he was writing about that the apostle John used the term *first*. He was writing about the resurrection of the soul. The expression, *first resurrection*, gives the key to the understanding of Revelation Twenty.

CHAPTER II

THE TWO RESURRECTIONS

There can be no understanding of Revelation Twenty without understanding what resurrections the apostle John had in mind when he referred to them in that Chapter. It is well, therefore, to study the other writings of the apostle which refer to the resurrections. John writes not only of two resurrections in Revelation but also in the Gospel which bears his name. They are referred to in John 5:19-29. This passage will give us light on Revelation Twenty. In quoting it below we have italicized what is known as the bodily or general resurrection.

John 5:24, 25, 28, 29, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.—*Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*"

In our first chapter we expressed the thought that the key expression which would unlock the meaning of Revelation Twenty is that found in verse 5: *This is the first resurrection*. If we know what the apostle meant by that expression we are well on the way to the understanding of the entire Chapter. We have shown that the first death is that of the soul. It cannot be denied that the first resurrection experience of the Christian is that of his soul. The regeneration of the soul is referred to as a resurrection in a number of New Testament passages. The Scriptures also refer to a second resurrection which is that of the body.

It so happens that John records the teaching of Jesus on two

resurrections in the passage which is quoted above. Jesus teaches that there is a resurrection of the soul and a resurrection of the body. If John in Revelation Twenty speaks of two entirely different resurrections than those spoken of by Christ it would, to say the least, be very confusing. However, we will discover that the Gospel of John gives light on the Revelation passage. It behooves us, therefore, to study John 5:24-29.

How Jesus came to teach about two resurrections must first be seen. Jesus had healed an impotent man on the Sabbath Day. This so enraged the Jews that they were ready to slay Him. But Jesus said to them: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." The Father did not stop His providential workings on the Sabbath and so neither did the Son. This further annoyed the Jews because therein Jesus made Himself equal with God.

Then Jesus goes on to say in John 5:19, 20 that the Son does only what the Father does. Furthermore the Father "will show Him greater works than these, that ye may marvel." Greater works were to be accomplished by the Son than the healing of an impotent man. These greater works consisted of the resurrection of the soul and of the body. Thus the incident of the miracle of healing led to the teaching of the greater miracles, namely, the two resurrections.

Up to the coming of Christ upon earth the work of raising the dead was the work of the Father. As Jesus states in John 5:21, "for as the Father raiseth the dead and giveth them life, even so the Son also giveth life to whom he will." This raising of the dead included both that of the soul and that of the body. These our Lord separates in verses 24, 25 (soul) and verses 28, 29 (body). The power which God the Father has in raising all manner of the dead is also the power of the Son.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE SOUL

The first resurrection is the resurrection of the soul. The first passing from death to life is that of the soul. This our Lord brings out clearly in John 5:24 which cannot be mistaken for a bodily resurrection of which our Lord speaks later. The verse reads:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and

shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

The above cannot refer to the resurrection of the body because it is a conditional resurrection. It depends upon *hearing* and *believing*. We know that the resurrection of the last day does not depend upon hearing and believing. Everyone will be raised on the last day regardless whether believing or unbelieving. The Bible is very definite on the truth that all will rise upon the last day. But the resurrection mentioned in verse 24 is conditional.

That it is a resurrection is seen clearly from the expression: "is passed from death unto life." That is exactly what resurrection means. It is a rising again from the dead. That which was dead is brought to life again. The soul that is dead through sin is made alive by the word of Christ. Through hearing and believing the dead soul receives everlasting life. The greater miracle is not the resurrection of the body but it is the resurrection of the soul. With the resurrection of the soul, physical dying is no death at all as our Lord stated to Martha: "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

Notice, too, the expression: "is passed." It is no future resurrection but a present or past one. The American Revised version gives the correct rendering of the Greek perfect: "hath passed." To a believer his first resurrection is already past. He awaits only the resurrection of the body.

It must be remembered that the same tremendous power that God exerts in the resurrection of the body He exerts in the resurrection of the soul. This we read in Ephesians 1:19, 20: "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." That is, the same mighty power that God exerted in the raising of the body of Christ from the tomb He exerts in the resurrection of each Christian soul.

John 5:25 continues the same thought of verse 24. It also is introduced by the twofold "verily" which indicates the tremendous importance of the resurrection of the soul. The verse reads:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and

now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live."

In the above verse there is again a limitation to the resurrection concerned. It is limited to those who hear: "And they that hear shall live." Not all hear the voice of the Son of God. There are some who do hear with their outward ears but not with the ears of their souls. Only those who truly hear the voice of Christ will live.

That this does not refer to the future resurrection of the body is indicated by the expression: "and now is." First our Lord states: "The hour is coming." This refers to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church beginning at Pentecost. But even now by the Word of the Saviour there were those who were made alive. Among them were His disciples upon whom He breathed the Holy Spirit.

A few commentators refer this to the individual raising of the dead such as Lazarus, the little damsel, and the widow's son. But these were not raised to the "everlasting life" mentioned in verse 24. They were re-awakened to an earthly life which was again liable to death. The few individuals raised from the dead would not justify the language of those two verses nor of the word "life" as used by the apostle John.

There is no doubt but that the passage, John 5:24, 25, speaks of the resurrection of the soul which Christ and only Christ could bring about. This was part, and an important part, of the "greater work." *And this is the first resurrection.*

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

Generally when people speak of the resurrection they think of the event that will occur at the Second Coming of Christ when the body will be resurrected and united with the soul. Concerning this resurrection, which is the second or general resurrection, verses 28 and 29 speak:

"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

Here there is no limitation or condition. *All* shall hear His voice. *All* shall come forth. It is not limited to those who believe. It is not limited to those who may hear. All that are in the grave shall come forth. This, of course, refers to the body as it is only the body that is in the grave.

In comparing the above passage with verses 24 and 25 one will notice important omissions. Christ does not use the expression, "and now is," regarding the resurrection of the body. This indicates that it is future. He omits the limiting expression, "they that hear." All hear when Christ makes the final resurrection call. He does not speak of only those "believing" being raised from the dead. The bodies of both believers and unbelievers will rise the last day. Christ does not speak of only one result: that of "life"; but He speaks of two results: "life" and "damnation." All this indicates so clearly that our Lord is speaking of two different resurrections. The first resurrection is that of the soul; the second, that of the body.

This distinguishing between the two resurrections guards against the heresy of Hymenaeus and Philetus, whom Paul mentions in Second Timothy. They denied the resurrection of the body, believing only in the resurrection of the soul. There are two resurrections according to the teachings of our Lord.

Some of our readers may be influenced by the teachings of the Scofield Bible which speaks of two different bodily resurrections separated by a thousand years. Our Lord contradicts this teaching in this passage when He states: "The *hour* is coming, in the which *all* that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Both the good and evil shall hear the voice of Christ in that *hour*. According to this teaching of Christ the bodily resurrection of both the good and the wicked will take place in the same hour. There is no interval of a thousand years in this passage nor in any other passage of the Scriptures.

CONCLUSION

The importance of this passage in the fifth chapter of the Gospel of John for our study of Revelation Twenty is that it records our Lord's teaching of two resurrections: that of the soul and that

of the body. The *first resurrection* is that of the souls of those who hear and believe. The *second resurrection* is that of the bodies of the righteous and the wicked.

In light of our Lord's teaching, which the apostle recorded, it is difficult to see how John would use the expression "first resurrection" in any other sense but that of the soul. It cannot mean, surely, the resurrection of the bodies of the righteous for that is not the first resurrection experience. It cannot mean the translation of the soul to heaven for that is not a resurrection from the dead. It can only mean the resurrection of the soul by the almighty power of God in Christ Jesus. The John of Revelation would not contradict the John of the Gospel.

CHAPTER III

THE ANGEL WITH THE CHAIN

Revelation 20:1, *"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand."*

There is no doubt that the book of Revelation is written for the purpose of giving encouragement to the believer. Encouragement is what one receives from reading the first part of Revelation Twenty. It gives a general picture of the defeat of Satan. This should give courage and hope to every follower of Christ. Satan has had so much power in the history of the world. From the fall of Adam to this very day Satan has brought havoc and ruin upon the earth. He is the great destroyer of souls. But here we read of his being bound and cast into the bottomless pit.

The binding of Satan was for the purpose of restraining his deception of the nations. For many centuries he had deceived nation after nation and empire after empire. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, all were victims of his deceit. They were completely under his dominance. But now he was to be bound so that he could deceive the nations no more. An angel with a great chain in his hand would bind him and cast him into a bottomless pit.

Naturally, this picture of the Angel binding Satan gives rise to a number of questions. One main question is: "Do we have here a literal picture or figurative?" And the second main question is: "When is the time of fulfilment? Is it in the past? Is it in the process of being fulfilled? Is it in the future?" Another question concerns the identity of the Angel. And still another concerns the meaning of the chain. Let us seek the answers to these questions.

LITERAL OR FIGURATIVE?

Throughout the book of Revelation we have figures of speech. For instance, Jesus is described as the Lamb. Naturally we do not

expect to see a literal lamb when we behold Christ. Satan is pictured both as a serpent and a dragon. These are figures of speech as Satan is actually a spirit. From these examples we can readily see that the expressions, "key" and "chain," do not have to be taken in a literal way.

The first hint that the key and chain are not material objects is that the angel descended from heaven. One would not expect material objects in the realm of the spiritual heaven. Then Satan is himself a spirit and we cannot conceive of him bound with a material chain. It is thus evident that both the key and the chain are symbols or figures of speech.

The key, in the Scriptures, is a symbol of sovereignty and power. Christ states in Revelation 1:18, "I have the keys of hell and of death." Certainly we cannot think of material keys for hell and death. The same thought is brought out in Matthew 16:19 where Christ declared to Peter: "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." There are no literal doors into the kingdom of heaven and no one would think that Christ meant literal keys. Christ was giving to Peter and to the true Church the power and authority as to whom should enter into the kingdom of heaven. *Key* is a symbol standing for sovereignty, authority, and power.

Likewise the chain is a symbol. It stands for restraining power. This will become apparent as we study several passages where the thought of binding is given yet where no literal chains can be meant. One such passage is Jude 6 and another is Matthew 12:29 where there is a reference to the binding of Satan. We will refer to these passages when we study the time of Satan's binding.

There is just a little misunderstanding in the minds of some people when you state that certain expressions in the Bible are figurative. They feel that it robs them of reality and makes them meaningless. That is not true. Figurative expressions stand for realities. The "Lamb" stands for the reality of the sacrificial atonement of Christ. The "Dragon" stands for the reality of Satan's power over ungodly nations. Even so the "key" and "chain" stand for realities. They stand for the real sovereign and restraining power of our Lord Jesus Christ. The figurative expressions help us to understand the spiritual realities and they help to portray them to the mind.

THE TIME OF FULFILMENT

When does the Angel bind Satan? There are some Christians who believe that the binding is to take place in the future. It is at the time of the second coming of Christ. But when one examines the Scriptures it is easily seen that this binding is definitely connected with the first coming of Christ and is in the process of being fulfilled.

The first passage which we should consider is Matthew 12:28, 29 which reads: "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house." The Pharisees had attributed the casting out of demons by Christ to the power of Satan. But Jesus informed them that Satan would not cast out Satan. A kingdom divided against itself would not stand. Jesus cast out demons by the power of the Spirit of God. This meant that Satan had been bound. One cannot enter into what had been the domain of Satan without first binding him. Christ had bound Satan and therefore could cast out demons. Thus it is very apparent that this binding commenced with the earthly ministry of Christ. It did not have to wait until the second coming of the Lord.

That something drastic happened to Satan with the first advent of Christ is seen also by the words of John 12:31, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." The casting out of Satan was not to wait the second coming but was *now*. When the seventy disciples returned from a preaching mission they stated to Jesus: "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name." And Jesus replied: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." This falling of Satan was not to await the second coming but took place during the ministry of Christ upon earth through the preaching of the Gospel.

In spite of the above passages there are people who will not believe that Satan is bound or that he has been cast out of his sphere of influence. They simply will not believe the words of Christ. "If Satan were bound and cast out," they argue, "why is there so much evil in the world? If we believe that Satan is bound we must deny our senses." It is better to believe Christ than it is to believe

our senses. The difficulty, of course, is that such people do not understand what is meant by the binding of Satan.

In Revelation Twenty it is stated definitely what is meant by the binding of Satan. We are not left in doubt. Verse 3 reveals that the binding is in reference to the deceiving of the nations. Previous to the first coming of Christ, the Gentile nations were under the complete control and dominance of Satan. All nations were pagan and without true religion. But with the coming of Christ this was all to change. Nations were not to be deceived entirely. This does not mean that individuals within nations or even a great portion of them would not be deceived. But during the period of the binding of Satan the nations would not be entirely deceived as were Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. Never until that short period just before the second coming of Christ would the nations be deceived as they were before the first coming of Christ. To that end Satan was bound.

However, some people feel that if Satan were bound he would have no influence in the world and upon individuals. That this is not the significance of the binding of Satan is seen from a study of Jude 6. There we read that the fallen angels were bound with chains. Yet that did not prevent their activity in the world. That passage declares: "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." The Gospels reveal the activities of these fallen angels. Therefore to be chained does not mean cessation of evil activity. Even so Satan, though bound, continues his evil work. But he is definitely restrained as to the sphere of his activity. He is bound by the decree of God. He cannot deceive the nations as he did previous to the coming of Christ.

THE ANGEL

Who is the Angel that binds Satan? Commentators are divided as to whether it is Christ or an agent of Christ. Personally we believe this Angel to be Christ. There is an Angel spoken about in the Old Testament who surely is the Son of God. He appears as a manifestation of God Himself, one with God and yet different from Him. This is the Angel who appeared to Abraham,

Jacob, and Moses. So it is entirely possible that the Angel of Revelation Twenty is Jesus Christ.

This is borne out by several other Scriptures. It is Christ who in Revelation 1:18 is said to "have the keys of hell and of death." It is Christ who in Genesis 3:15 is to crush the head of the serpent. It is Christ concerning whom John states in his first Epistle: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." From these passages it is apparent that Christ is the supreme agent who binds Satan.

This does not mean that Christ does not use other agents in the binding of Satan. He uses the Church. In Romans 16:20 we read: "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." This is a reference to Genesis 3:15. Although Christ is meant in Genesis yet Paul infers that it is the Church who is to bruise the head of Satan. The Church is the Body of Christ. It is the Church through whom Christ destroys the work of the Evil One.

THE CHAIN

Knowing that it is the Church through whom Christ bruises the head of the Serpent, it is not difficult to ascertain by what means Satan is bound. The chain is the Gospel. Wherever a soul is released through the preaching of the Gospel there Satan is restrained and limited. As John declares in his Epistle: "that one toucheth him not." Satan is so bound in regard to everyone born from above that he cannot destroy such a one.

It is significant that immediately after announcing that the prince of this world was cast out, Jesus announced the means. He said in John 12:32: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." It was through His death that He would destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. The Gospel is: Christ died for the sins of His people. It is the cross. By the preaching of the cross Satan is to be destroyed. That is the chain which will limit his activity in the nations.

When the seventy disciples returned from a successful preaching mission, they reported that even the devils were subject to them through the name of Christ. To this replied Jesus: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the

enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you." The Church, through the preaching of the crucified Saviour, has power to crush the Evil One and all his cohorts. It is the Gospel that is the chain which will bind Satan so that his activities will be restrained among the nations.

Unfortunately the Church of today does not realize the power that Christ has given her. Christ has placed in her hands the chain by which she can bind Satan. She can restrain his influence over the nations. But today the Church bemoans the fact that evil is becoming stronger and stronger. She bemoans the fact that the world is coming more and more under the control of the Devil. Whose fault is that? It is the Church. She has the chain and does not have the faith to bind Satan even more firmly. Satan is bound and the Church knows it not! Satan can be bound more firmly and the Church does it not!

CHAPTER IV

SATAN

Revelation 20:2a, *"And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan."*

In the beginning of history Satan in the form of a serpent tempted Adam and Eve. Many people wonder why God allowed Satan to bring about the fall of mankind. Concerning this there are many things which we do not know. But we do know this: that man was not coerced to fall. He had free will. He was not compelled to heed the temptation of the Devil. In the light of the manifested goodness of God to Adam, it is indeed amazing that he would listen to the Evil One. Nevertheless he did and that began the terrible reign of Satan over the ungodly world.

Satan was at one time the greatest angel in heaven. In Timothy we read that his downfall came about through his pride. He rebelled against God and influenced other angels to rebel against God. Since that time he and his demons have hated God and all that is good and pure. He has worked without ceasing for the destruction of mankind and the enlargement of hell.

The great ambition of Satan is to destroy the souls of men and to prevent them from being saved. He is constantly seeking to persuade man to sin. He did everything he possibly could to cause Job to renounce his God. He even sought to tempt Christ to renounce God the Father. We know from the Word of God that he is sometimes influential in bringing about sickness, financial loss, and death.

Satan is the ruler of the kingdom of darkness. He has under him principalities, powers, and demons. He is called the god of this age—the prince of this world. This does not mean that he has complete power over this world. It is over the evil world that he has power. It is over such who are termed the children of disobedience that he has his control. He is definitely limited when it comes to the children of God. He cannot touch them to their

destruction. He can tempt and annoy them but he cannot conquer them.

It is the common conception that Satan rules over hell. It is thought that the great function of the Devil and his angels is to torment the dwellers in hell. That is not so. Satan and his angels are themselves to be tormented in hell. Hell was made for them and all those who ally themselves with the forces of evil. Satan and his demons fear hell even more than does mankind for they know the torments of it. They do not rule hell but are subject to the fires of hell.

We are happy to read in verse 2 that the Angel laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan. His four names are mentioned because he is going to be limited in his fourfold activity upon the earth. His universal sway over the earth, signified by his four names, is to be over. Let us consider his four names.

DRAGON

The Evil One is termed by the name *Dragon* to show that he is the animating principle which dominates the ungodly world-powers. It is he who influences ungodly nations and empires to wage war against the people of God. That the term *dragon* has a connection with pagan world powers is seen in the fact that Pharaoh of Egypt and Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon are compared to dragons. In Ezekiel 29:3 we read: "Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers." And in Jeremiah 51:34 we read, "Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon."

Wherever we see paganism trying to crush and destroy the people of God there we see the Evil One manifested as a dragon. Egypt tried it by attempting to kill all the male children of the Israelites. The Assyrians conquered Palestine and took the Israelites captive. So did the Babylonian empire under the leadership of Nebuchadrezzar. Then for several hundred years Palestine was under the control of the Medo-Persian empire which was later succeeded by the Grecian Empire. The Roman Empire came in con-

tact with both the Old Testament Church and the New Testament Church. It sought to stamp out both. The opposition of these six pagan empires were all inspired by Satan. Whenever the opposition of ungodly nations comes to the fore the name of *Dragon* is used for the Evil One.

SERPENT

A very familiar name for the enemy of God and His people is *Serpent*. Satan first appeared on the scene of history in the form of a serpent. He succeeded in influencing Adam and Eve to mistrust the Word of God and to accept his word. He poisoned them in a subtle way. Whereas the name *Dragon* manifests his power, the name *Serpent* manifests his cunning.

Wherever deception is used, wherever error is spread, wherever doubt is implanted there is the work of the Evil One as the Serpent. It is the Serpent who sends out floods of heresy. It is the Serpent who sends out false prophets as angels of light. It is the Serpent who causes learned scholars to disparage the Bible by false criticism. Often the Serpent does more damage to the Christian Church than does the Dragon. The Church prospers under the fiery persecution of the great red Dragon but weakens under the subtle influence of the false teaching of the Serpent.

It is amazing how frequently in the Gospels and the Epistles that the Christian Church is warned to be on guard against deception and false doctrine. Our Lord warned His disciples against false doctrine and false prophets. In the Sermon on the Mount, He said: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." And in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew He warns the Church against false Christs who would try to deceive even the elect.

Paul has this interesting passage in Second Corinthians which reflects on the work of the Serpent. He writes: "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him. Such are false apostles, deceitful work-

ers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness.”

The study of church history will reveal that the Church has suffered more from false prophets and false doctrine than from persecutions. In times of persecution the Church grows stronger; in times of heresy the Church grows weaker. The Serpent is more to be feared than the Dragon. That is why in the New Testament there are more warnings of the activities of the Evil One as a Serpent than as a Dragon.

DEVIL

There is but one Devil and he is Satan. The King James version terms the fallen angels as “devils” but actually they are termed “demons” in the Greek. There is but one Devil.

The primary meaning of the Greek term is that of *false accuser, calumniator, slanderer*. That is what the term *devil* means. It is descriptive of the Evil One. He is so called because of his malignant spirit against the people of God. He is always suspecting evil of them and charging them with evil motives. A classic instance of this is Job. Satan said regarding Job: “Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.” The Devil could not believe that Job served God from a sincere heart and falsely accused him of serving God for gain.

So the Devil slanders all the children of God. He simply cannot believe the sincerity of those who truly worship God. He accuses them of hypocrisy day and night. It is a signal for great joy and praise when Satan was cast down as we read in Revelation 12:10, “And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.”

The Devil does not lack followers upon earth who use the

same tactics in falsely accusing Christians as to their motives for serving God. Christians are accused of being hypocrites, of being evil doers, of doing more harm than good. It is inconceivable to the mind of a worldly man that a Christian loves Christ and serves Him because of this love. So the worldly man slanders the Christian even as his master, the Devil, slandered Job.

SATAN

The fourth name by which the Evil One is designated is that of *Satan*. This word properly signifies an adversary, an opponent. Truly the Evil One is the adversary of every human soul. He would destroy all into everlasting hell. We read in Revelation Twelve that it is he who deceiveth the whole world. He works evil on the bodies of men according to Luke 13:16; I Cor. 5:5; I Tim. 1:20. It was Satan who entered into the hearts of Judas and Ananias to turn them aside from Christ. It is Satan who hinders the work of the Church and transforms himself into an angel of light in order to deceive the Church. It is through his evil influence that what was once a church of God is transformed into a synagogue of Satan.

Woe unto the Christian Church if she underestimates the influence and power of the great adversary of the Church! We need but read the book of Acts and the Epistles to see what damage he did to the early Church. He is the enemy of all but especially of those who follow the Christ.

Thus the four names reveal the character and the power of the Wicked One. The number *four* designates the earth. He is the god of earth and those who are *earthy*. In the book of Revelation there is a difference made between "the dwellers on earth" and "the dwellers in heaven." The one is the seed of the serpent and the other is the seed of the woman. The one is the ungodly seed and the other the godly seed. The prince of darkness rules only over the dwellers on earth, the ungodly seed.

Lest we think that his power is supreme and that he is unconquerable let us note his defeat by Christ and His Church. In Revelation Twenty he is bound and cast into the bottomless pit. In Romans 16:20 it is stated by Paul to the early Christians: "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

James tells the Christians: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

And the Wicked One is overcome by the blood of Jesus Christ. Revelation 12:11 is a very important passage in regard to the method by which Satan is overcome. It states: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony." It is true that we must not underestimate the influence and power of the Evil One; but it is also true that he can be easily overcome by those who believe in the power of the blood of Christ and are not ashamed to testify of it. They are the overcomers.

Yes, at one time his fourfold name indicated his sway over the four corners of the earth. But now the Angel has "laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan."

CHAPTER V

BOUND A THOUSAND YEARS

Revelation 20:2b, 3: *"And bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled; and after that he must be loosed a little season."*

In Matthew Twelve Jesus asks this searching question of His enemies: "How can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man?" By this question Jesus taught that one cannot enter into the domain of Satan without first binding him. Jesus could not cast out demons except that He first bound the Prince of demons. Jesus could not release souls from the control of Satan except that He first bind Satan.

It is not difficult to see according to the words of our Lord that there has been a binding of Satan. Souls could not be rescued out of the kingdom of darkness except that the prince of darkness be bound. There has been a binding of Satan. It is such a binding that he cannot touch the Christian. This the apostle John verifies in his epistle when he states: "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." Every soul that has been born of God is safe from the clutches of the Devil. The Devil is definitely bound as far as the true Christian is concerned.

We read in Revelation Twenty that Satan is also bound as far as deceiving the nations is concerned. Where previously he had completely deceived the Gentile nations now he could no longer do so. This does not mean that no one within a nation could not be deceived. There might be many within a Gentile nation that would be deceived by the cunning of Satan. Even though Satan is bound as far as the individual Christian is concerned, yet a Christian may, for a period of time or concerning a certain doctrine, be

deceived. So also in regard to the nation. It simply means that Satan would no longer be in complete control of the nations as he was before the coming of Christ.

The period of time that Satan is to be bound in regard to deceiving the nations is one thousand years. From the term "thousand years" we have the term "millennium." Whenever the term *millennium* is used we are apt to fill it in with our own ideas. But let us remember as far as Revelation Twenty is concerned all that it tells us of this millennium is: that the nations will not be deceived; that the saints sit upon thrones and judgment is given to them; that they live and reign with Christ; and that this is the first resurrection. No doubt this is the glorious period of which the Old Testament prophesies. However, let us definitely remember that this passage does not speak of Jesus seated upon a literal throne in the literal city of Jerusalem reigning with Jews over the Gentile nations of this world. The passage does not speak of this.

An important question to decide is whether the *thousand years* is to be interpreted as a literal thousand-year period. So far we have already seen that there are a number of figurative expressions used in this Chapter. We do not expect to see, for instance, a literal dragon or a literal serpent. Neither do we expect to see a literal key or a literal chain in the hand of the Angel. Figurative expressions are used in this Chapter and throughout the book of Revelation.

Whenever numbers are used in the book of Revelation they are used as symbols. For instance we read of *seven* spirits before the throne. Now we know that there is but one Spirit. The number *seven* is used to designate the fulness of the Spirit. Again we read of the Lamb having *seven* horns. We do not expect to see seven literal horns but we know that the completeness of the Lamb's power is signified by the number *seven*. *Twelve* is the number of the Church. Thus we find wherever the Church is mentioned we have twelve or its multiple. Hence twelve apostles, twenty-four elders, and 144,000 saints are mentioned.

Ten in the Bible stands for a rounded total. Thus we have the ten commandments and the ten plagues. A *thousand* is the cube of ten. This symbolizes vastness of number or time. Thus we have the number 144 *thousand* to indicate the totality of God's

people. The same thought is brought out in the foursquare city of 12 *thousand* furlongs. Taken literally it would indicate a cube city of 1400 miles. The meaning of the term *thousand* is brought out in Deuteronomy 1:10, 11. In verse 10 it is stated that the Lord God made the Israelites as the stars of heaven for multitude. Then in verse 11 it is added: "The Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye are." The *thousand* is not used in a literal sense but in a figurative way to indicate vastness. In Psalm 50:10 is the expression "the cattle upon a thousand hills." This does not mean that only the cattle on a literal thousand hills are the Lord's but the total amount of all the cattle on all the hills of the world are His.

The term *thousand years* in Revelation Twenty is a figurative expression used to describe the period of the Messianic Kingdom upon earth. It is that period from the first Advent of Christ until His Second Coming. It is the total or complete period of Christ's Kingdom upon earth. Christ Himself stated that with the casting out of demons the Kingdom of God had come and Satan was bound. If the binding of Satan began with the first coming of Christ then it follows that the *thousand years* began with His first coming.

Now the natural objection against this view is that the period from the first coming of our Lord to the present time can hardly be described as a Millennium. For one thing wars have not ceased and wickedness is still very much prevalent. As someone has stated: "if Satan is bound he must have a long tether." All appearances seem to be against the view that we are in the millennium now.

The trouble is that we have altogether a too materialistic concept of the millennial blessings. We fail to see that the greatest blessings are spiritual and they are in our midst. We are looking for a material kingdom, a material throne, and material prosperity. In this we fall into the same error of the carnal expectations of the Jews and the error with which our Lord had to contend with His own disciples. We fail to see that the greatest millennial blessings are already in our midst.

According to the prophets the great blessings of the "latter days" would be the coming of the Messiah and the establishment

of His Kingdom. This has been accomplished. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was another blessing. This has been accomplished. Salvation for all that call upon the name of the Lord was another blessing of the Messianic reign. This has been accomplished. The inclusion and conversion of the Gentile nations in the covenant blessings was another thing to occur. This has been accomplished and is in the process of fulfilment.

An individual Christian may ask himself this question: "What more could the popular conception of the millennium give me than I already possess? I have a Saviour who is my Prophet, Priest, and King. God the Father is my covenant God. I have the forgiveness of sin. I have the promise of eternal life in heaven. I belong to the Church which is the Lamb's Bride. I have the Holy Spirit as my Teacher, Sanctifier, and Comforter. I have security against my greatest enemies: Death, Hell, and the Devil. I am standing on Mt. Zion and am a citizen of the Holy City. I belong to the commonwealth of Israel and am not a stranger from the covenants of promise."

What more does a Christian desire? More material prosperity? Is not the Lord wealth enough? Perhaps we desire less "tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" But are we not in all these things more than conquerors through Him who loves us?

What we really want is greater victory over personal sin. But is that not promised in this dispensation? We need not wait for the so-called future millennium. What we do want is peace amongst the nations and less wickedness. But that is promised if we go forth conquering and to conquer in the name of Christ. Let us not be blind to what has already been accomplished and thus rob God of glory. The absence of greater victories is due to our lack of faith, and not because of the absence of millennium blessings.

Besides a too materialistic conception of millennium blessings another difficulty is that we have not paid enough attention to the parables of our Lord which indicate that the millennial blessings will pervade the earth gradually. The Kingdom of Heaven is likened to a grain of mustard seed which grows and becometh a tree. The Kingdom of Heaven is likened to leaven which will gradually

leaven the earth. Our Lord stated that the Kingdom cometh not with observation. That is, it will not be established with great fanfare. Our Lord is not slack concerning His promises but with Him one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. There is the same indication in the Old Testament. Daniel's stone which smote the image became a great mountain, filling the earth. Ezekiel's river was ankle deep to start with but increased to a river in which to swim. Both the *amil* and the *premil* are in error when they maintain that the millennial blessings foretold in the Old Testament must come about by a cataclysmic act at the second coming of Christ. That is not the teaching of the Bible. Both in the Old Testament and in the New it is taught that the Kingdom blessings would come about by an almost imperceptible, gradual growth.

"But," some will object, "is not the new creation perfect?" I believe that I am a new creature born by the Spirit of God. But that does not mean I am perfect. But because I am not perfect that does not mean I am not a new creature. Isaiah gives us many beautiful pictures of the millennium. But even in the midst of the prophecies of the latter days he also points out those who will not receive the blessings of the Messiah's reign. In the pictures which Zechariah, the prophet, gives of millennial blessings there are indications of enemies and nations still to be converted. Our Lord indicates that there will be tares until the end of this age.

We are told definitely that Satan is to be bound in regard to the deceiving of the nations. And he has been bound. At no time since the coming of the Christ has he been able to deceive the entire world. Is it not true that in all nations Christ has His followers? Yet before the coming of the Lord there were only a handful in the little country of Palestine. Satan had complete control over the nations of the world. That is not true now. There is direct evidence that Satan has been bound.

The Bible does not teach that by the binding of Satan wickedness will be entirely eliminated and the activity of Satan entirely limited. We are told in Jude 6: "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Though these demons were chained yet we read of their activity in the Gospels. This is also told in II Peter 2:4. "For if

God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." Here again the chains of darkness did not limit the angels that fell. And let us remember that Satan was one of the fallen angels and thus also chained. These verses give us the right to our view that the chaining of Revelation 20:1-3 does not mean a complete cessation of activity on the part of Satan.

Satan has been cast into the bottomless pit. The Greek word for "pit" is *abussos*. The demons who possessed the Gadarene maniac besought our Lord that He would not cast them forth into the abyss, Luke 8:31. Though the abyss was their habitation yet under the permissive will of God and for His purposes they were allowed to be active on the earth until that day when they will remain in the abyss forever. Even so, Satan being cast into the abyss does not mean a cessation of his activity upon earth. He will remain active in a limited degree until the second coming of our Lord when he will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone and where he will remain forever.

However, it should be carefully noted that as far as the deceiving of the nations is concerned Satan is shut up in the abyss and sealed. He cannot for the period designated "thousand years" deceive the nations as he did previous to the coming of Christ. That is, he cannot until a short time before the coming of the Lord. Then he is to be loosed for "a little season." This season is "little" in comparison to the time of the millennium. At that time he will be successful in deceiving many nations and the Church will face a time of persecution from which she will be delivered by fire from heaven.

CHAPTER VI

I SAW THRONES

Revelation 20:4a, "*And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them.*"

The apostle John in his vision beheld thrones. *What* thrones were these? *Where* was their location? *When* were they in existence? *Who* sat upon them? These are very important questions and the answers will determine to a great degree the interpretation of Revelation Twenty. There is no doubt but that verse 4 is the most difficult verse to explain in the entire Chapter.

While verse 4 is difficult it is not necessarily the key verse of the Chapter. Nevertheless it must be shown that the interpretation of this verse fits in with the general interpretation of the rest of the Chapter and with the teaching of other portions of God's Word. The interpretation of verse 4 and its comparison with other verses of the Bible will require several chapters. In this chapter we will concern ourselves chiefly with the *thrones*.

WHAT THRONES?

What thrones did the apostle John see in his vision? Surely they were not literal material thrones such as those upon which the kings of the earth sit? We do not expect to see a thousand or a million little earthly kingdoms with a saint seated upon a throne of gold ruling a number of subjects. While that may be pleasing to the carnal mind and according to the expectations of Judaism, it is not the teaching of the Scriptures.

An earthly throne set up within an earthly kingdom for His followers, is against the teachings of Christ. This conception Jesus rebuked when He said to His disciples: "Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be

servant of all." In the light of this teaching of our Lord it is rather strange how a material, earthly, and carnal conception of the thrones continues to hold the minds of some people. The thrones are not literal.

Throne is a figure of speech indicating the reign of the saint. For instance, it is mentioned in Revelation 3:21 that the believer who overcomes will sit with Christ on His throne. That, of course, is not a literal throne for it would have to be a very large one, indeed, to hold all the saints. The throne indicates the Messianic reign of Christ. The Christian who overcomes will take part in the Messianic reign.

That the saints do reign is indicated in a number of verses. II Timothy 2:12 states: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." In Revelation 5:10 we read: "And has made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on earth." And in Romans 5:17 it is stated: "much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." The type of "lordship" the believer possesses in this life is revealed in I Cor. 3:21, 22, "For all things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours."

The thrones stand for the saints' spiritual dominion within himself and over the world. Through the grace of Christ they reign in life over the flesh, the world, and the devil. In all things he is more than a conqueror through Christ. He reigns over sin because sin has no dominion over him. He reigns over Satan who cannot touch him. He reigns over the world because of Him who has overcome the world.

There is a reign of the saint over the world. This he does by spiritual means and not by the power of the carnal sword. The saints bring about a state of society in which Christian opinion and morality will be dominant. This Jesus indicated when He stated that His followers are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. That Christian ideas rule the life of some nations is already in evidence. One need but compare a nominally Christian nation with a heathen country to see how Christian ideals have pervaded the life of certain nations. Christian morality has elevated many nations.

There is another sense in which it may be stated that the Christian is seated upon a throne. This is in respect to the power of keys given to the Church. The saints sit upon thrones judging those who would enter into the Church. This is referred to in Matthew 19:28 which is a text that we will seek to interpret in the following chapter. There is also a rule over the Church which must be considered later.

Thus the thrones of Revelation 20:4 are not literal thrones. Rather they signify the spiritual rule of the saint within his own heart; the rule over the world by spiritual means; and his rule over the Church.

WHERE LOCATED?

Where are these thrones located? Are they located in heaven and occupied by the departed saints during what is called the intermediate period? This cannot be. In verses 8 and 9 of Revelation Twenty we are informed that at the end of the thousand years Satan will deceive the nations again. These nations are upon earth. These deceived nations will compass the camp of the saints and the beloved city and the scene of this siege can only be upon earth. Satan and his hosts do not set siege to the saints in heaven. The scene is definitely upon the earth. The thrones, the camp, and the beloved city all have reference to the Church upon earth.

It is apparent that the binding of Satan has some effect on the reigning of the saints. The reigning of the saints is synchronous with the binding of the Evil One. It is because Satan is bound that the saints are able to reign upon earth. Surely the binding and the loosing of Satan does not have any influence whatsoever on the life of the saints in heaven. But it does to those who live upon earth.

Furthermore, Revelation 5:10 tells us definitely that the reign of the saints is upon earth: "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign upon the earth." There are those who say that the reign will be upon the renewed earth after the second coming of Christ and the final judgment. But that cannot be. Christ gives up the Mediatorial Kingdom after the final judgment. And we must not forget that the thrones exist during the thousand-year period. After this period Satan gathers Gog and

Magog to oppose the saints. Surely this would not happen on the "renewed earth"! Surely this would not happen in heaven! No, the scene is upon this present earth. That is the location of the thrones.

WHEN DID THEY EXIST?

When were these thrones in existence? In verses 4-6 we have a period synchronous with the binding of Satan. While Satan is bound for the thousand years the saints are reigning. You will notice how verse 7 takes up where verse 3 leaves off. Verse 3 concludes: "and after that he must be loosed a little season." Verse 7 picks up that thread: "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison." John pauses, as it were, in verses 4-6 to tell us what is happening to the saints. Then he continues in verse 7 to finish the story of Satan. The time of the saints reigning upon earth is the same time as the binding of Satan which we believe to be from the day of Pentecost to the "little season" just before the second coming of Christ.

In verses 8 and 9 we read that the saints are subject to the onslaught of Gog and Magog. This again indicates that the time of the thrones is before the second coming of the Lord. The last judgment takes place after Satan's final defeat. The reigning of the saints must, therefore, take place before the final judgment.

Another indication as to time is the fact that it takes place during the Messianic reign. Many interpreters are apt to forget I Corinthians 15:24, 28: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." At the end of this world the Messianic reign is over along with that of the saints.

Then another important thing must be noted in regard to the time of the thrones. According to the King James Version the verbs *sat*, *was given*, *lived*, *reigned*, are in one tense; while the verbs *had worshipped*, *had received* are in another tense. It would seem from this that the period of not worshipping the beast and not receiving his mark was before the sitting, living, and reigning. Actually all the verbs are in the same tense in the Greek. The

tense of all verbs is the aorist. This is corrected in the American Revision Version which reads: "and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years." The time of sitting on the thrones and reigning with Christ is the same as that of not worshipping the beast.

It was while the saints were actually seated upon the thrones that they were refusing to worship the Beast and to receive his mark. It really was an evidence that they were reigning with Christ—that they did not receive the mark of the Beast and refused to pay him homage. However, we will deal with this matter further when we consider the martyred saints and those who were living during the period of the Beast and his image.

WHO WERE ENTHRONED?

Who are they that are seated upon the thrones? Perhaps the reader has gathered that it is our opinion that every saint of the New Dispensation is seated upon a throne. The thrones were not limited to those who were martyred when the Beast prevailed nor were they limited to those who refused to worship him. Otherwise the thrones are limited to only a small portion of the saints of Christ. All are not martyred nor do all live during the period of the Beast.

Every saint is seated upon a throne. Every saint is a king. Every saint rules over sin. Every saint is a victor over the world, the flesh, and the devil. Every saint is more than a conqueror. *All things* in this world and in the world to come belong to every saint. The apostle John through the symbol of the "throne" gathers up the teaching of the New Testament that the saint reigns upon earth.

Thus these thrones are not literal and material for that would be against the teaching of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. These are not thrones in heaven during the intermediate period for the scene is upon earth. These are not thrones after the second coming of Christ for Satan is not yet cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. Rather they are thrones occupied by the saints on earth during the period of thousand years.

CHAPTER VII

THE REGENERATION

In the previous chapter we showed that the thrones of Revelation 20:4 are not literal thrones. *Throne* is a figure of speech indicating the reign of the saint. The saints reign over the flesh, the world, and the devil. The place of this reigning is upon earth. The time is during the Messianic reign of Christ.

In this chapter we digress from the study of Revelation Twenty to see whether our interpretation of "thrones" is according to the general teaching of the Word of God. How does it fit with other verses which speak of the reign of the saints? There is an important passage in Matthew's Gospel which speaks of thrones. It is Matthew 19:28 which states:

And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

The setting of the above verse is as follows. A rich young ruler turned sadly away from Jesus. He wanted eternal life. The Lord had asked him to give up his earthly possessions and follow Him. This led Jesus to comment: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" This caused Peter to say: "Lo, we have left all, and followed thee; what then shall we have?" Jesus replied: "Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging twelve tribes of Israel." He added also: "And every one that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life."

The promise that the apostles would sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel in the regeneration has been variously interpreted. Some refer this to a period when the Lord

will reign upon earth over the Jewish kingdom and that the apostles will also occupy thrones in this period. This interpretation has no foundation in the Scriptures. For instance, there is not even one verse in the New Testament which speaks of Christ sitting on a literal throne and reigning upon earth in the literal city of Jerusalem during the millennium.

Others have interpreted this to have reference to the Consummate Kingdom. At His second coming the earth will be renovated. Upon this renovated earth the apostles will have a prominent place in ruling over the saints. The fatal objection to this interpretation is that this takes place during the reigning of the *Son of man*. It is during the reign of Christ in His Messianic capacity. At His second coming He delivers the kingdom to the Father as it states in I Corinthians 15:24: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power." The Messianic reign ceases at the second coming. This is stated in verse 28 of the same chapter: "And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

While we have not seen it in print, we have heard Matthew 19:28 referred to as describing the intermediate period. It is thought that Christ had reference to the abode of the departed saints. It is the life of the souls in heaven. However, heaven would hardly be called the regeneration. The word properly means "born again" or "born anew." It is a rebirth; it is a re-creation. It refers to such a radical change that it might be properly called a second birth. This, of course, cannot refer to heaven, the abode of God. The Scriptures speak of no radical change or the necessity of it in heaven which is the abode of God, the good angels, and the departed saints. It must have some reference to this earth which has need of renewal, renovation, and re-creation.

With Calvin I believe that the regeneration has reference to the Gospel dispensation. It has reference to the new order of things which was started with the advent of Christ. The regeneration is another expression for the Kingdom of God. This is confirmed by Luke 22:30 where Christ also refers to the apostles sitting on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. There He states:

“And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me: that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” In this verse “the kingdom” takes the place of the expression “in the regeneration.”

The regeneration is that period of time in which the Son of man reigns as the Messiah over the earth. As a reward for His suffering upon the cross God the Father has exalted God the Son and has given Him all power in heaven and in earth. God the Father does not reign over the world now; it is God the Son. God the Son is seated upon the throne of His glory and reigns over this world. This is the period of regeneration which will be terminated with the second coming of Christ when He delivers the kingdom to the Father.

That the period of the regeneration relates to the earth is also indicated in the two parallel passages: Mark 10:29, 30 and Luke 18:29, 30. In these two passages the fact that the apostles would be seated upon twelve thrones is omitted. They do mention, however, the fact that those who sacrifice in this life for Christ will be compensated a hundredfold in this life. The reward is also related to the earth and life upon the earth. It is in the period of the regeneration that this compensation will be made.

THREE MISCONCEPTIONS

There are three misconceptions which have caused people to fail to recognize that the regeneration is the period of the Gospel dispensation upon earth. The first misconception is that which speaks of Christ being glorified only at His second coming. Christ is seated upon the throne of glory now. Jesus stated to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus: “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” Through the cross Christ entered into His glory. Peter on the day of Pentecost shows how God raised up Christ to sit on His throne: “being by the right hand of God exalted.” The exaltation of Christ has already taken place. This Paul also states in Philippians: “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.” The exaltation does not await the second coming but has already taken place. The glory and reign of Christ

are present. Christ is seated upon the throne of His glory now. After all the events which shall take place at the second coming Christ will give up this Messianic throne of glory so that God may be all in all.

The second misconception about this period of the regeneration is that it is thought of as a state of society in which perfection and sinlessness prevails. It is claimed that all the saints living in "the regeneration" will be perfect and without sin. However, this is not the picture which the Scriptures give us. The very word "regeneration" should teach us that. In Titus 3:5 the same word is in reference to the Christian upon earth: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." The Christian upon earth, though *regenerated*, is not perfect. The old nature still clings to him. He is not perfect and sinless. As we need not look for a perfect and sinless man who is regenerated neither need we look for a perfect and sinless society which has been regenerated. Upon earth regenerated society, like the regenerated individual, is not perfect.

The third misconception about the period of the regeneration is that it will be brought about by a sudden cataclysmic act to occur at the second coming of the Lord. This present earth and heavens will be suddenly destroyed and a new material earth and heavens will take their place. Upon this new earth and heavens the resurrected saints will dwell. The *regeneration* is thought of as a *regenerated* earth. In other words, the "new heaven and new earth" of Revelation 21:1 is thought of as a material concept rather than spiritual. This is an error.

It is not the purpose of this book to enter into the question of the "new heaven and new earth." However, we ask our readers to compare two statements of Revelation 21:4, 5 with II Corinthians 5:17. The two statements are: "For the former things are passed away" and "Behold, I make all things new." Paul states that these things are true upon earth in this present dispensation in II Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Paul refers to the regenerated individual; John in Revelation refers to regenerated society, namely, the Church.

Yes, to a new creature in Christ old things are passed away. For him the first heaven and the first earth are passed away. He is no longer bound by its lusts and ambitions. He is no longer ensnared by its fleeting pleasures. He lives in a new heaven and new earth. All things have become new. His conversation now is in heavenly places. His relationship to God has been changed. Everything has changed for the Christian. A new world has been opened up before him. And what is true of the individual who has been born from above is true of the entire Church of the firstborn.

JUDGING THE TWELVE TRIBES

Coming back to Matthew 19:28 we read that in the regeneration the apostles will sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Without going too much in detail, the meaning of this is that the apostles through their teachings rule the Church of God. This is just another way of stating that the Church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" as stated in Ephesians 2:20. It is stated in still another way in Revelation 21:14, "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles."

In this dispensation the apostles are still ruling the Church through their teachings. We read in Matthew 23:2, 3: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do." Moses through the giving of the law ruled the old Israel until the coming of Christ. Now the apostles rule the new Israel. The "twelve thrones" of the apostles take the place of Moses' seat.

We are now in the period of the regeneration. True Christians who form the "Israel" of God are judged (ruled) by the apostles. The "thrones" of the apostles are no more literal than the "seat" of Moses. All this is in agreement with our interpretation of Revelation 20:4 where the thrones of the saints are not to be considered as literal and the period of their reigning has reference to this earth. It is the period of the Messianic reign. It is the period of the regeneration.

CHAPTER VIII

THE JUDGING OF THE SAINTS

Revelation 20:4b, *“And judgment was given unto them: . . . and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”*

During the millennium judgment is given to the saints. Because we associate the condemnation and punishment of evil doers with the word “judgment” we are apt to think that this judgment has reference to the condemnation and punishment of the wicked in the last day. Some think that this has reference to the final judgment which will vindicate the saint. A little reflection, however, will show that this cannot be the final judgment.

Whatever this judgment is, it is continuous throughout the millennium. It is during the entire period of the thousand years. As the saints are seated upon thrones throughout this period even so they are occupied in judging during the entire period. Then one must remember that only Christ is the Judge during the final judgment. All stand before His throne of judgment. Thus it is clearly seen that this judgment given to the saints is not the final judgment.

Those who are acquainted with the teachings of the Scriptures know that the word “judge” has several meanings. One meaning is seen in the book of Judges. There the word “judge” indicated one that ruled; one who delivered Israel from slavery and oppression; one who restored the wayward Israelites to religious purity.

In the book of Judges these men are also called “saviours.” In the American Revised Version of Judges 3:9 we read: “And when the children of Israel cried unto Jehovah, Jehovah raised up a saviour to the children of Israel, who saved them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother.” In Judges 3:15, Ehud is also called a saviour.

Prophetically Obadiah speaks of these *saviours* in the 21st verse of his prophecy: “And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.”

The mount of Esau here stands for the ungodly world which shall be judged and ruled by the saints. The *saviours* will conquer the world and establish the kingdom of the Lord's. Paul states the same thing in I Corinthians 6:2, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" While some refer this to the final judgment we know that the saints are nowhere in the Scriptures represented as taking an active part in the final judgment of the world. In the next verse Paul states: "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" The significance of this is stated by the disciples: "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name." Whereas before the Devil and his angels ruled the world, in the new dispensation the saints would take over.

That this is the meaning of the word "judgment" is also revealed by our Lord in the Gospel of John. There we read in chapter 12:31, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." This is not the final judgment as is indicated by the word *now*. It refers to the ruling of Christ and His saints over the world. The prince of this world is cast out. He no longer rules completely as he did previous to the coming of Christ. As Luther has stated it: "And the gospel shall not only be judge over flesh and blood, nay, not only over some of Satan's angels or devils, but over the prince himself, who has the whole world mightily in his hands."

This ruling is a fulfilment of many Old Testament prophecies which speak of Christ judging the world in the sense of ruling the world. Psalm 96:13, "For he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." Isaiah 2:4, "And he shall judge among the nations." Isaiah 42:4, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth." Daniel 7:22, "Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." Psalm 72:2, "He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment." All these passages prophesy the righteous rule of Christ over the earth to which Christ refers in John 12:31.

Included, of course, in this judging is the ruling of the Church. This is indicated in the statement of Matthew 19:28, "Ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." This

clearly has no reference to the final judgment or of judging in the sense of condemning and punishing wrong doers. This is the ruling of the Church. This is the power of the keys. This concerns matters of discipline. This concerns such matters as Paul discusses in I Corinthians 6.

LIVING WITH CHRIST

Another privilege of the saints is that they live with Christ. Only Christians live. They have experienced the resurrection of the soul. At one time they were dead in trespasses and sin but they have been quickened in Christ Jesus. They are alive in contrast with the rest of the world who are dead even though they think that they are alive.

Christians are alive because they have fellowship with the living God through Jesus Christ. They know God. They know His justice and they know His love. They know His power and they know His wisdom. They truly can address God as their Father who is in heaven. This is life. This is living in Christ.

The saints live with Christ in that they are recipients of spiritual blessings and comforts. The Holy Spirit dwells in their souls. He sanctifies them. He enables them to mortify the deeds of the body. He teaches them wisdom that is hid from the wise of this world. This is a spiritual life that is unknown to souls who have not been quickened in Christ Jesus.

The Christians also live with Christ in that their affections are on those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Their conversation is in heaven. This is true even while they are dwelling upon earth. Their present life is hid in Christ even though they dwell upon earth. Upon earth they are living with Christ.

REIGNING WITH CHRIST

Not only do the saints upon earth live with Christ but they also reign with Christ. Notice carefully that it does not state that Christ is reigning with the saints upon earth but that the saints are reigning with Him. Nowhere in Revelation Twenty do we read that Christ reigns bodily upon earth. As a matter of fact there is not one text in the New Testament which speaks of Christ liter-

ally reigning upon earth in the literal city of Jerusalem. That is a teaching which is prevalent in some circles but is not taught by Christ or the apostles.

But how can the saint reign with Christ while the saint lives upon this sinful earth? In the very same manner as Enoch walked with God. The fact that Enoch walked with God did not mean that Enoch was in heaven. Nor did it mean that God was in bodily form upon earth. Enoch walked with God in a spiritual sense as everyone understands. The saint upon earth reigns with Christ in the same manner as Enoch upon earth walked with God.

As Christ dwells in His saints even so do the saints dwell in Christ. So near is Christ to His saints upon earth that whatsoever is done to them is done to Him. Christ reveals this in the picture of the Judgment given in Matthew 25: "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Christ considers Himself as dwelling in all faithful Christians in such a way that whatever is done to them is done to Him. Needless to say, this does not mean His bodily presence on earth.

Christ stated to the persecutor of the Christian Church: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Paul thought that he was persecuting heretics but he was persecuting Christ in His saints. Even as Christ lives and suffers with His saints on earth, even so do they reign with Him in heaven. He is persecuted in them; and they reign with Him. As is stated in II Timothy 2:11, 12: "It is a faithful saying: for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him." Though dead, we live; though suffering, we reign. The one is no different from the other. As He partakes of our suffering, so we partake of His glory. As the one does not require His bodily presence upon earth, neither does the other require the presence of the saints in heaven. The saints reign with Christ even while they dwell upon earth.

One reason why it is so difficult to have a proper estimation of the reign of the saints is because of the carnal conception of such a reign. It is associated with an earthly kingdom and earthly power. But as Christ's kingdom is not of this world neither is the believer's. The kingship of the believer does not require a literal

throne with a subject people under him. His reign is spiritual. He reigns over the devil, the flesh, and the world. Even death is subject to him. This is a much superior reign than is generally conceived. Yet people seem to be fascinated by the lesser and carnal type of reign.

The apostle Paul speaks of the present reign of the believer in I Corinthians 3:21, 22: "For all things are yours; whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come; all are yours." Notice that among other things the world belongs to the Christian. But is not the world in opposition to the child of God? Yes, but even that opposition works for the glory of the believer. The very fires of temptation of the world are so controlled by God that they are used to burn away the dross of the believer. All things work together for good to those who love God. The world does not reign over the Christian but the Christian reigns over the world. One might just as well deny the present reign of Christ as to deny the present reign of the saint.

The Twentieth Chapter of Revelation indicates that the reign of the saints is upon earth in that the opposition of Gog and Magog is upon earth. This is stated in verses 8 and 9: "And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." By no possible interpretation can this be a picture of heaven. We are told definitely that the scene is upon earth. It is upon earth that the saints who reign are beset by Gog and Magog. This should prove conclusively that the reign of the saints mentioned in Revelation Twenty is upon earth.

CHAPTER IX

THE REIGN OF MARTYRS

Revelation 20:4c, *"And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands."*

In the preceding chapters it has been shown that Revelation 20:4 gives a picture of the present Gospel dispensation. This verse does not deal with the intermediate state of the souls of believers. It does not deal with a kingdom to be established after the second coming of our Lord. It deals with the present dispensation upon earth.

It has been shown that the terms *thrones, judgment, living, and reigning*, relate to the life of the saint upon earth. Like terms, or equivalent terms, are used throughout the New Testament. It is no strange teaching that Christians are kings upon earth. Christ has made them kings. They form a royal priesthood. Their reign is not to be likened to the reign of an earthly king over an earthly kingdom. Their reign is spiritual. They reign over the flesh, the world, and the devil. All things belong to the Christian.

Now what may seem to contradict all this is the experience of the Christian martyrs and others who lived in periods of persecution. There have been periods in the history of the Christian Church when the saints suffered tribulation and the enemy seemed to triumph. Verse 4 refers to two such periods of persecution: the first under the Beast; and the second, under the Image of the Beast. These two periods of persecution are pictured to us in Revelation Thirteen.

Two Beasts and an Image of the first Beast are mentioned in Revelation Thirteen. The first Beast is pagan Rome. He is described as "like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion." For several centuries

under the leadership of cruel Emperors, pagan Rome persecuted the Christian Church. An incidental verification of the fact that it was the persecution by pagan Rome is seen in the use of the verb "behead." It means literally "to cut off with an axe." This was the Roman method of execution.

The second Beast is described in Revelation Thirteen as one who "had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon." This is papal Rome. It is the Roman Catholic Church which is described by this figure. This second Beast, however, is not referred to in our verse. It refers to the first Beast and its Image. The Image of the first Beast is the Holy Roman Empire. This was an Empire that sought to bring back the old Roman Empire. It is a matter of history that the Papacy sought to use the Holy Roman Empire to persecute true Christians.

It may be well to point out that there were those who lived during the reign of the two Beasts who were not martyred. They were not put to death for their faith in Christ. Nevertheless they suffered. Some were deprived of their living and suffered terrible poverty. Their wealth was confiscated. The boycott was employed against them. Others were imprisoned or suffered other inconveniences for the sake of the Gospel. Nevertheless they did not worship the Beast, neither his Image, neither received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands. The mark implies likeness in spirit and character. In spite of all pressure used against them they remained Christian in spirit and character.

Now it is said of both martyrs and sufferers that they were seated upon thrones and that they lived and reigned with Christ. How can that be? How can they be said to be enthroned when the Beasts had the upper hand? How can they be said to live in the midst of the terrible persecution of the Beasts? How can they be said to reign in the midst of apparent defeat? How can they be pictured as triumphant when it is apparent that the two Beasts were triumphant over the Christians?

The question is, did the Beasts triumph? Their aim was to crush Christianity and cause Christians to apostatize from the faith. In this the Beasts failed and the Christians were triumphant. The martyrs never showed their kingship more strongly than when confronted with the axe, the lion's den, and the torch. They had

control over their souls, over sin, over temptation, over the Beasts, and over the Devil. They could not be dethroned! They were living! They were reigning! They were in all these things more than conquerors.

In his second epistle to Timothy and the second chapter Paul tells of his suffering for the sake of Christ. Then he states: "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with Him, we shall also reign with Him." In the midst of death one lives with Christ. In the midst of suffering, a Christian reigns with Christ.

PSUCHAI

However, it is claimed by the amillennialist that the apostle John did not see living persons; he saw *souls*. These *souls*, he explains, are disembodied spirits. A recent writer of this school states: "The word here translated *souls* (*psuchai*) is found a hundred times or more in the New Testament for the soul, as distinct from the body." This statement is open to serious challenge. The New Testament, as we shall see, very seldom uses the Greek term "*psuche*" to describe the disembodied spirit.

The premillennialist, on the other hand, thinks that he is perfectly justifiable in translating the Greek term "*psuche*" by the word "person." This would include both body and soul. This is a possible interpretation if the context warrants it. In the following passages the term "*psuche*" is used of the entire person: Acts 2:41, 43; 3:23; 7:14; 27:37; Romans 13:1; I Peter 3:20; Revelation 16:3. The passage would then read: "I saw the persons (bodies and souls) of them who had been beheaded." But John tells that he is describing the first resurrection which is that of souls only. The context, therefore, forbids this translation of "*psuche*."

There is another sense in which "*psuche*" is used frequently in the New Testament and that is in the sense of "life." There are over thirty-five clear cases where "*psuche*" is translated in this sense. Among them are Matthew 2:20, "For they are dead which sought the young child's *life*." Luke 12:22, "Take no thought for your *life*, what ye shall eat." Acts 20:10, "Trouble not yourselves; for his *life* is in him." The apostle John who wrote the book of Revelation uses "*psuche*" almost exclusively in that sense: John 10:11, 15, 17; 12:25; 13:37, 38; 15:13; I John 3:16; Rev. 8:9; Rev. 12:11.

It is therefore entirely permissible to translate the "psuchai" of Revelation 20:4 by the word "lives." The clause would then read: "And I beheld the lives of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus." It might seem, on the face of it, that the martyrs had not reigned in life. But the apostle sees them also as enthroned in life. In their lives upon earth they also were more than conquerors.

Verse 4 of Revelation Twenty may be paraphrased in this fashion: "I beheld the saints seated upon thrones, ruling over the flesh, the world, and the devil; yea, I beheld the victorious lives of those who had been beheaded and also those who suffered because they refused to worship the beast; as a matter of fact all saints lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

To come back to the question of translating the term "psuche" to mean "disembodied soul." There are very few cases in the New Testament where it can be translated in this sense. Thayer's Lexicon gives four examples: Acts 2:27, 31; Rev. 6:9; 20:4. The passages in Acts cannot possibly refer to the disembodied soul of Christ for his body was in the tomb. The disembodied soul is never committed to the grave which seems to be the sense of "hades" in the passage. Christ committed His spirit to the Father as it stated in Luke 23:46. If His soul in distinction from His body were in the grave, how could He say to the thief: "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise." The passages in Acts refer to the fact that Christ was not left in a state of death. And concerning Revelation 6:9 Hengstenberg has this to say: "The souls of the martyrs in verse 9 are not the souls in the intermediate state, as expositors commonly suppose; the souls are meant of which it is said in the Old Testament, that they are in the blood—the animal souls (see, for example, Genesis 9:5); they are murdered souls; but the blood itself might as well have stood, and in verse 10 indeed is actually put instead of the souls here. This is plain from comparing the original passage, Genesis 4:10, where the blood of Abel cries to God from the ground."

From the above it can be clearly seen that it is not so evident that the reference to "souls" indicates the intermediate state. And if it were the intermediate state that is indicated why are only the martyrs mentioned? All departed saints are in this intermediate state.

That verse 4 is speaking of the lives of the saints upon earth is again indicated by the tense used in speaking of those who did not worship the beast, neither his image, neither received his mark upon their foreheads. In the King James version the verbs *sat, was given, lived, reigned*, are in one tense; while the verbs *had worshipped, had received*, are in another. But in the Greek the same tense is used for all—the aorist. Since they are all in the same tense they must refer to the same time. That is, the time of not worshipping the beast and not receiving his mark is the same time as that of sitting on thrones and living and reigning with Christ. The American Revised Version thus correctly translates the passage: “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

Another question which remains is: how can it be said concerning the saints upon earth that they live and reign with Christ *a thousand years*? Three score years and ten is the average life of the saint upon earth. This, however, is no more different than stating that the Romans ruled over the world for many centuries. This does not mean that each individual Roman lived for that period. It refers to the Roman Empire. Even so the apostle John is speaking of the Church in relation to the binding of Satan. He is speaking, as it were, of the Body of Christ. As the Roman Empire is one so is the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is always represented upon earth. The Church never ceases but reigns throughout the thousand-year period.

It is our contention that Revelation 20:4 speaks of the Gospel dispensation. It reveals the victorious reign of the saints upon earth regardless of martyrdom and suffering. In all these things they are more than conquerors. The use of the word “*psyche*” in the New Testament shows how difficult it is to apply it to the intermediate state of the believer’s soul. And to relate this verse to a kingdom to be established after the second coming of Christ brings such a host of problems and contradictions as to bring hopeless confusion.

CHAPTER X

THE DEAD AND THE LIVING

Revelation 20:5, 6, "*But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*"

In our study of verse 4 we have seen that Christians upon earth live and reign with Christ. By the power of the Gospel the Christian has been translated from death to life. His soul has a living communion with God through Jesus Christ. He is the recipient of spiritual blessings and comforts. In Christ he has conquered the world, the flesh, and the devil. He has conquered death and hell. Through the resurrection of his soul he truly lives.

But the rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years were finished. All men are dead through trespasses and sin. Some are resurrected by the grace and power of God. They experience life. Their souls live. But the rest of the dead lived not. The remainder of mankind continues in the state of death. They have no communion with God. They have no spiritual blessings and comforts. They are dead. They live not.

It is unfortunate that in the King James version the word *again* is used. It does not appear in the Greek. The dead thus described never lived. Their souls continued in death. They were dead even in the midst of life.

It might seem that these dead would remain so only during the thousand-year period. They lived not *until the thousand years were finished*. One might think that when the thousand-year period ended that these dead would live. But the conjunction *until* is used in the sense "to the time that." The rest of mankind remained in spiritual deadness to the time that the thousand years ended. They had no part in the first resurrection. Their souls

remained dead. An illustration of this use of the conjunction *until* is seen in I Samuel 15:35, "And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death." This does not mean, of course, that after Samuel died he began to see Saul. It simply means that up to the time of his death he did not see Saul. Another illustration is Isaiah 22:14 where it is stated: "Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die." Here the word *till* excluded them from ever having their iniquity purged. Even so the conjunction *until* has an excluding sense in that the dead never come to life.

THE FIRST RESURRECTION

In the first two chapters of this book we dealt with the question of the first resurrection. The amillennarian would fain refer this to the intermediate state of the disembodied soul. Geerhardus Vos in his article on the Eschatology of the New Testament in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* refers the first resurrection to "the state of glorified life enjoyed with Christ in heaven by the martyrs during the intermediate period preceding the parousia."

The above view forgets the meaning of the word *resurrection*. It is: "a rising again from the dead." When the Christian soul leaves the body to dwell in heaven, it is not a *resurrection*. The soul in the Christian is alive; it is not in a dead state. Its removal from the body into heaven could be better termed an ascension or translation. To state that the translation of the soul into heaven is a resurrection is to contradict directly the teaching of Christ that "whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." The very fact that Revelation Twenty deals with a resurrection eliminates the interpretation that the Chapter is speaking of the intermediate state of the soul.

As has been shown in the first chapter the logical way to determine the meaning of the *first* resurrection is to discover what is the *first* death. When Adam and Eve sinned their first experience of death was the death of the soul. The apostle Paul describes the state of the Ephesian Christians before conversion as those "who were dead in trespasses and sins." And in I Timothy

5:6 it is stated: "But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." That can only refer to the soul. The primary death is that of the soul.

In the New Testament there are a number of passages which speak of the dead becoming alive in reference to their conversion. For instance, it is stated in Colossians 2:12, 13: "Having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, being dead through your trespasses, and uncircumcision of your flesh, you, I say, did he make alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses." Here the regeneration of the human soul is compared to the resurrection of Christ. They who were dead were made alive. This is the first resurrection. And John states in his epistle: "We know that we have passed from death unto life." Surely this is the first resurrection of which the Scriptures speak.

The second resurrection is that of the body which will occur at the second coming of our Lord. The apostle John speaks of both resurrections in John 5:24, 25, 28, 29. In part of this passage it is stated: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." This is a conditional resurrection. It depends upon *hearing* and *believing*. Through hearing and believing the dead soul receives everlasting life. Notice that our Lord states "is passed" from death unto life. This is not contingent on the death of the body. As a matter of fact the American Revised Version renders the Greek perfect: "hath passed." To a believer his first resurrection is already past.

In the second part of the passage in John 5 it is stated: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." All shall hear His voice. All shall come forth. Both believers and unbelievers are mentioned. This is the second or general resurrection. The first is that of the soul; the second, that of the body.

BLESSED AND HOLY

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection. To be blessed means to be happy. And such is the experience of every true believer. He is blessed because he has been raised from death to life. He is blessed because he has Christ as his Saviour. He is blessed because he had fellowship with the living God. He is blessed because his sins are forgiven. He is blessed because heaven is his. His conversion is indeed a raising from the dead.

Moreover he is holy. He has been separated from sin and consecrated to the service of God. Holiness means separation and consecration. The believer has been set apart by God. He is set apart from the rest of the world. His portion is to serve God and enjoy Him forever.

On such the second death hath no power. The second death is the casting of both soul and body into everlasting hell. But on the Christian this terrible second death has no power. As his soul has been resurrected so will his body. As Christ stated: "He that believeth on me shall never die." As the Christian's soul has been changed from death to life in the first resurrection so his body will be raised in the second resurrection. This is stated in Romans 8:11, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." Neither body nor soul of the true believer will experience the second death.

But they shall be priests of God and of Christ. The apostle Peter wrote to believers. "Ye are a royal priesthood." And in the first chapter of Revelation John states that Christ hath made believers to be "priests unto God and his Father." The same truth is revealed in Revelation 5:10. The common priesthood of the believer is a cherished doctrine of the evangelical Church. It is a priesthood that is experienced in this life.

As priests the believers have direct access to God. In the old dispensation only the high priest once a year could enter into the Holy of holies. But now every believer by virtue of his priesthood can enter into the Holy of holies—into the presence of God. Through the blood of the atonement he can come before the mercy seat.

As priests, believers present unto God their spiritual sacrifices. They offer to God the sweet incense of their praise. They present their bodies as living sacrifices unto their God. Instead of a material temple they worship Him in the spiritual temple. It is not necessary for them to offer animals as sacrifices upon the altar for Christ offered Himself once and for all. That part of the priesthood is no longer necessary.

As priests, believers intercede for others. They are not mediators between man and God. There is only one Mediator and that is Christ. But as priests they pray for others. They pray for such who are not able to pray for themselves. They pray for those who are unsaved. They pray for those who are burdened and afflicted. In their intercession they perform the office of priests.

And they shall reign with him a thousand years. To every believer there is given a crown. He reigns upon earth. He reigns over the world, the flesh, and the devil. He conquers death and hell. He shares in the victories of Christ.

All this belongs to the blessedness of the first resurrection. The body does not have to die to experience this blessedness. Through the resurrection of the soul the Christian is raised into heavenly places even while on earth. This is not apparent to the world and often is not appreciated by the Christian. However, as the Christian grows in grace and knowledge, he learns of the riches of Christ which are his. But the evil world knows not the blessedness of the first resurrection. The world is dead in trespasses and sin and the dead live not until the thousand years are finished. And then they only experience the dreadful power of the second death.

CHAPTER XI

SATAN IS LOOSED!

Revelation 20:7, 8, "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea."

Satan is loosed! The chains which held him in the bottomless pit are removed. No longer is he confined to his prison. No longer is he limited as to the sphere of his wicked operations. No longer is he restrained from deceiving the nations. What a woeful day that will be for the inhabitants of the earth!

There are those who believe that the loosing of Satan will occur after the second coming of Christ. It will be, it is claimed, towards the end of His thousand year reign upon the earth. Jesus is to reign on a literal throne in the literal city of Jerusalem. Suddenly towards the end of the thousand years His reign is to be challenged by Satan. Christ and those who remain faithful to Him are to be contained in the city of Jerusalem. He and His army are seemingly helpless against the onslaught of Satan and his hosts. Only the miraculous intervention of God in sending fire from heaven will save the situation.

If the above were true, it would mean that Christ would suffer a second humiliation. Though all power has been given to Him both in heaven and upon earth yet He must wait for a miraculous deliverance from the Father. The Scriptures, of course, does not speak of a second humiliation of Jesus. His humiliation ended with the cross. Further, this is in contradiction to several passages of Scripture which speak of Christ coming at the day of judgment. Hebrews 9:27, 28 states: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them who look for

him shall he appear the *second time*, without sin, unto salvation." The appearance here spoken of is the appearance of Christ at the day of judgment to complete the salvation of His Church. But how could He so come if He were bodily upon earth during the millennium which is to take place before the day of judgment? This view also contradicts such passages as I Thessalonians 4:16 and II Thessalonians 1:7, 8, 10. How could Christ be revealed from heaven if He were upon earth in His human nature? And still further there is not a single text in the New Testament which indicates clearly that Christ will actually reign in the earthly Jerusalem in His human nature.

Satan's loosing will be that period just before the second coming of the Lord. It will take place after a long period of peace and prosperity. The "thousand years" is a symbolical number indicating a long period of time. As we have already shown, it is that period from the ascension of Christ until His second coming.

The period of the millennium is a time of great blessings. The greatest of the millennium blessings are spiritual. It is the time when the Holy Spirit is given in abundance to the Church. It is a time when many experience salvation through faith in the crucified Saviour. It is a time when many possess eternal life and fellowship with the living God. It is a time when God dwells with the Church. It is a time when the middle wall of partition is broken down between Jew and Gentile believer. It is a time when the Church receives the protecting care of Christ the Lord. The many Messianic blessings predicted in the Old Testament are experienced by the saints upon earth.

Gradually, the by-products of spiritual blessings will prevail upon the earth. Carnal minded men look upon these as the primary blessings of the millennium but actually they are secondary. We will always be sojourners upon the earth even as David declared in the midst of temporal blessings: "For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding" (I Chronicles 29:15). Nevertheless, it is the teaching of Scripture that at times that nations are righteous there will be material blessings. In Psalm 67 where it speaks of the time when all nations will be governed by God, it states: "Then shall the earth yield her increase;

and God, even our own God, shall bless us." It is evident that earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, and other calamities of nature will cease when God is pleased with the nations. Another picture of material prosperity is given in Isaiah 30:23, "Then shall he give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal: and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures." Isaiah 65:21-23 and Ezekiel 34:23-31 give other pictures of material prosperity that may be expected during the reign of the Messiah.

But the important thing to realize is that before the loosing of Satan all nations will become predominantly Christian. This is clearly implied in the Covenant promise: "And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Paul interprets this to mean that the seed of Abraham will inherit the world in Romans 4:13, "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." That is why Christ in the Great Commission commanded His followers to make disciples of all nations. He promised that the meek shall inherit the earth. The Bible is rich with promises that all nations will turn to the Lord. Typical of them is Psalm 22:27, 28: "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations."

It is after the fulfilment of such prophecies that Satan will be loosed again. But this, according to verse 3, will be for "a little season." Verses 4-6 form a parenthesis between verses 3 and 7. In verse 3 it is mentioned that Satan would be loosed for a little season and now from verse 7 it is disclosed as to what will take place with this event.

THE NATIONS DECEIVED

Before the advent of Christ Satan held sway over the nations of the world. With the coming of Christ his control was broken. He was bound as far as the nations were concerned. At present there is no nation that is totally pagan. There are believers everywhere. The Gospel has gone forth to the four quarters of the

earth. Of course, there is much land still to be occupied. But the Church has gradually grown from the few disciples in Palestine to millions of Christians throughout the world. This growth will continue till the loosing of Satan. Then he will deceive the nations as he did before the advent of Christ.

Notice that Satan does not break out of prison by his own power. He does not break his own chains. He is loosed by the Lord. Why the Lord withdraws His restraints is within the secret counsel of the Godhead. We know that just before the flood God withdrew His Spirit from among men to reveal the exceeding wickedness of man and God's righteous judgment. Even so before the final judgment day the Spirit will be withdrawn from the great majority of men. Satan will have his way. This will be the great apostasy.

The nations to be deceived are called Gog and Magog. The mention of Gog and Magog immediately recalls Ezekiel 38 and 39 where these names indicated the enemies of Israel. It was popular at one time (and still may be) for premillennialists to associate Gog with the dictator of Russia because in Ezekiel he is ruler over Meschech and Tubal. With the use of imagination they associate Meschech with Moscow and Tubal with Tobolsck. Because both start with the same letter it does not indicate they are the same cities. You might just as well state that heaven is hell because both start with the letter *h*. Besides this, in Revelation 20 Gog is a nation and in Ezekiel Gog is a prince. This shows the utter foolishness of such an interpretation. And further, the Gog of Ezekiel comes from the north and the Gog and Magog of Revelation come from the four quarters of the earth.

The names of Gog and Magog are used much as we might use the names of Hitler and Nazi after our experience in World War II. *Hitler* and *Nazi* bring before our minds cruel enemies who wrought much damage. We might well term some future tyrant *Hitler* and some future nation *Nazi Horde* without having Germans in mind. In Revelation the names of the old enemies are used to designate new ones. Gog and Magog represent the future enemies of the Church whose names are as yet unknown. This type of interpretation is taught in Revelation 11:8, "And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually

is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." Sodom and Egypt are "spiritualized." Even so we "spiritualize" Gog and Magog.

The nations represented by Gog and Magog are in the four quarters of the earth. This term is to be considered in its symbolical import rather than geographical. It means world-wide. It is an ecumenical movement. Every nation is deceived. The number of the enemy is as the sand of the sea.

It is difficult for some to conceive of the nature of the opposition. The language is so vivid that it is hard for us to realize that this is not a battle of arms—of sword and gun. Our Lord clearly indicates that the battle for Christianity is not fought with carnal sword. It is a battle between the true Gospel and the false Gospel. It is a battle of truth against error. It is a battle of light against darkness. It is not a war against flesh and blood "but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." The Old Testament wars were but types of the spiritual battles to be fought in the New Dispensation.

Nor must we think that this happens in a moment, a day, a week, a month, or a year. The deception of the nations is a subtle thing. Even as we have seen an evangelical generation being changed into a modernistic generation so it will be at the end of the millennial period. Peace and prosperity incline the human heart to become careless. Satan plants doubt; unbelief becomes the fruit. Rebellion against God may not be open at first. It will be secret as it was in the heart of Judas. Eventually the rebellion will come out in the open. It will grow like wildfire. Nation after nation will be poisoned by Satan. In this particular period it will not be restrained for Satan is without chains and out of his prison.

It may seem strange that it will be possible to turn a host of happy people, prospering under the blessing of God, into such a world-wide rebellion. It would almost seem impossible that Satan could influence people to their own hurt. But alas it is a repetition of history. Who could be more happy than the angels in the presence of God? But Satan and a host of angels rebelled. Who could be more happy than Adam and Eve in the beautiful Para-

dise? But a simple temptation of Satan caused them to rebel against the commandment of God. Look at the prosperity of Israel during the rule of Solomon but Israel, too, turned against the God who blessed them so abundantly. In the light of history it is not so difficult to see how the subtlety of Satan will turn a people blessed of God to rebel against Him and His Christ.

CHAPTER XII

THE SIEGE OF THE BELOVED CITY

Revelation 20:9, "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them."

We are aghast at the power and influence of Satan in this present generation. The evil that is present in the world has led some Christians to feel that we are in the midst of the Great Apostasy. Yet a little knowledge of history will reveal that the fate of the Church in this present generation compares favorably to the fate of the Church during the days of Roman persecution, or during the dark ages, or during the days previous to the Reformation. We who have the freedom of worship and can propagate the Gospel without fear of persecution cannot say that we are living in the midst of the greatest apostasy the Church has ever witnessed. Such a view betrays ignorance of history. An honest appraisal of conditions will indicate that Satan is still restrained. He is still weighed down with chains. And surely more so in this present generation than in some of the generations of the past.

But the day is coming just previous to the second coming of the Lord when there will be a world-wide apostasy. What fearful days they will be for the Christian Church! Gog and Magog will cover the breadth of the earth. The number of hostile enemies will be as the sand of the sea. Only a remnant will remain faithful to the cause of Christ. The enmity will be fierce. The struggle will be the greatest since the first advent of the Lord. It is Satan's last attempt to crush the followers of Christ.

It will be a world-wide conflict. Again we state that it is not to be a military clash of carnal weapons. Christians will not use guns, missiles, planes, tanks, and atom bombs to defend themselves. There will undoubtedly be persecution. The enemy may

use physical violence. But the main weapons will be in the realm of the spirit. The false doctrines of Satan will enter in the life of the Church. New heresies will prevail. Satan will use his poison intensively and extensively. Nation after nation will become predominately pagan. The apostasy will be world-wide. It will be in America as well as Russia. It will be in England as well as in Japan. It will be in Europe as well as in Asia. The apostasy will cover the earth. Only a remnant represented by The Beloved City will remain faithful.

It must be borne in mind that the Church will be in a measure responsible for this apostasy among the nations. She is supplied with sufficient armor to face and defeat Satan. But while the Lord tarries and delays His coming, the Church will become careless. Discipline will not be exercised as it should and heresy will be tolerated. The defensive weapons with which the Lord has endowed the Church will be neglected. The Church will also forget that she is militant. The offensive sword will remain in the scabbard. Even at the present day the Church little realizes her responsibility for the darkness that prevails. It is the Church that is the light of the world.

THE CAMP OF THE SAINTS

They compassed the camp of the saints about. The Church is likened to a military camp. This is a figure borrowed from the time of Moses and Joshua when the Church even externally presented the form of a military camp. The twelve tribes with their banners surrounded the Tabernacle on four sides. The camp was in the form of a square; of which the four sides were to be placed toward the four quarters of the compass. This was a type of the heavenly city as seen by Ezekiel 48:20 and the city foursquare of Revelation 21:16. The Camp and the City are but different figures of speech to describe the Church upon earth. The Church in heaven will never be surrounded by enemies such as are pictured to us in Revelation 20.

The ancient camp of the Israelites was both for defensive and offensive purposes. But it was chiefly for offense. They were on their way through the wilderness to the promised land. They were on their way to drive the heathen tribes out of the land. The

Church of today is too much on the defensive and not enough on the offensive. The Church has not only been given the shield of faith but also the sword of the Spirit. She is to go forward conquering and to conquer. This is what the apostles did and also the early Church. The Church must never forget that in the sight of God she is a military camp formed for the purpose of driving the heathen out of the promised land.

THE BELOVED CITY

The Church is also termed The Beloved City. To many this is a figure of speech to describe heaven. This, of course, cannot be true of that expression as used in Revelation 20. Satan and his host do not surround the saints in heaven. They do not set siege to heaven. The scene is upon the earth. The nations of the earth battle the Church upon earth. The Beloved City is a figure of speech to describe the Church upon earth.

To others this is the literal city of Jerusalem. Just a little thinking will show how impossible this is. Imagine all the armies of the nations of the world laying siege to one city in Palestine! And you must picture modern armies equipped with missiles, bombs, and planes. The land of Palestine could not contain all the armies of the world. This is figurative language. This is the language of the Old Testament to express the enmity of the world against the Church.

This is verified by the Scriptural use of the term *Jerusalem*. The Beloved City is not like the old material Jerusalem but it is the new spiritual Jerusalem. The Scriptures themselves do the "spiritualizing." This Paul does first in Galatians 4. He states that he uses the two *Jerusalems* in an allegorical sense. And in verse 26 he writes: "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." This can only be a spiritual Jerusalem because no future material Jerusalem can be "the mother of us all."

The writer of Hebrews also "spiritualizes" Jerusalem. He writes in chapter 12:22, "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." Notice that it is stated "ye are come." This is no future material city but a present spiritual city. And notice that this is not the Consummate Kingdom for believers are citizens of that City even while they are upon earth.

There are many interpreters who feel that the Holy City of Revelation is a picture of the Consummate Kingdom—of heaven after the second coming of Christ. How then can it be stated in Revelation 11:2, “But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not: for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.” Surely it does not mean that heaven will be trampled under foot by heathen nations for a short period of time!

The Holy City of Revelation 11 and of Revelation 20 and of Revelation 21, 22 are one and the same City. It represents the Church of God upon earth. Because it is attacked and besieged by enemies it cannot refer to the abode of the saints either in the intermediate period before the second coming of Christ or to the Consummate Kingdom. Of course, it may be argued that while the Holy City of Revelation 11 and 20 refers to the Church upon earth surely the Holy City of Revelation 21, 22 refers to the Consummate Kingdom—to heaven after the second coming of the Lord. But a careful exegesis of the last two chapters of Revelation will indicate that this is not so.

It is one of the mysteries of the history of interpretation that so many commentators take for granted that the last two chapters of Revelation form a picture of the Consummate Kingdom. It is taken for granted that after the picture of the final judgment in Revelation 20 the next would be a picture of heaven in the consummate state. This, however, is an error. In Revelation 21, 22 we have a recapitulation of all the glorious promises of the Word of God. The apostle John gathers together various prophetic pictures of the Old Testament and relates them to the Church. This he himself reveals clearly.

John tells us in Revelation 21:2 that he saw “the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” This immediately indicates the Church; and the Church before the consummation for she is the bride of the Lamb. We are told definitely in I Corinthians 15:24, 28 that at the second coming Christ will deliver the kingdom to the Father so “that God may be all in all.” But during the Gospel dispensation the kingdom is the Lamb’s.

In verse 9 one of the angels said to John: “Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” And what did the

angel show him? The angel showed him "that great city, the holy Jerusalem." The Bride, the Church, and the Holy Jerusalem are one and the same thing. Furthermore, it cannot be heaven for it descends out of heaven.

There are two errors we wish to combat. The first is the conception that the Holy City is a material city. The very measurements of the City should indicate that the author is giving figurative description. Revelation 21:16 reads: "And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal." Twelve thousand furlongs amounts to practically fourteen hundred miles. Here then is a picture of a city fourteen hundred miles long, fourteen hundred miles wide, and fourteen hundred miles high! The land of Palestine could not contain such a city. Surely it must be interpreted figuratively. The next verse indicates that the protecting wall is 216 feet. The height of the city is 7,000,000 feet while the wall around it is only 216 feet! Surely this passage fairly shouts that we are not to take the description in a literal way.

The second error is that the Holy Jerusalem is the consummate state. We have pointed out that it is the Lamb's Bride which indicates the Messianic or Gospel state. There would hardly be a necessity for a wall to protect it from enemies if it were the consummate state when all the enemies of the Church are in hell. There is yet a division of nations which indicates an earthly scene: "And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it." There are still tears for it is said that God will wipe them away. There are still wounds of sin for we read that "the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Is that a picture of heaven where healing is needed and medicine provided? The gates are open to those who have as yet not entered. After the description of the Holy City there is still the invitation to come to the river of water of life which is in the center of the city: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

We are conscious that this is but a very brief indication of

what the Holy City really signifies. There are questions of interpretation which we have not answered. This we trust to do in a book on the interpretation of Revelation 21, 22. But surely enough has been indicated that the Holy City is situated in time and history and that the consummate state is not indicated.

FIRE FROM HEAVEN

And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. This is the fire which the Jews looked for in vain during the siege of the earthly Jerusalem in the year 70 A.D. They looked in vain for a miraculous deliverance. But those in the New Jerusalem at the time of the final onslaught of Satan look not in vain for deliverance. It will come.

The expression "fire from God out of heaven" alluded to Genesis 19:24, "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven." And again it is based upon Ezekiel 39:6, "And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the Lord." These are types of the final outpouring of the wrath of God upon the enemies of the Church.

Since nothing more is written in this prophecy concerning an intervening period between the destruction of Gog and Magog and the resurrection of the dead this must be the final destructive blow. It is the revealing of Christ as described in II Thessalonians 1:7-9, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

CHAPTER XIII

THE DOOM OF THE DEVIL

Revelation 20:10, *"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."*

How terrible and revolting would be the history of the Devil if it were written with all its horrible details! Even to review the broad outlines of his activities is depressing. It started with his rebellion in heaven. Then he led a host of angels astray and changed them into demons whose abode is hell. Then he poisoned Adam and Eve and robbed them of Paradise. He left his venomous trail of murder and deceit throughout all the pages of history. Up to the first advent of Christ he controlled the nations by his deceit.

How thankful we are that with the advent of Christ Satan was cast out of the heavens. He fell like lightning from the height of his power. For the thousand-year period he was bound. He could no longer deceive the nations as he did formerly although his poison still remains to bring misery and woe. At the end of the millennium period he is again to be released to deceive the nations. That will be a woeful day for the world. Fortunately it is to be only for a short season. Then will come the final doom. The Devil will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone and shall be tormented day and night.

There will be no sympathy with the lot of the Devil. Even those who have been deceived will howl with glee at the terrible punishment of Satan. It is a terrifying picture that the lake of fire and brimstone presents. A lake of fire! drowned in flames and yet fully conscious. A lake of brimstone! surrounded by suffocating fumes and nauseating odors and yet alive. This is the deepest hell. How deserving a fate for one who has brought such terrible misery and woe upon earth for so many centuries.

There is no relief from this torment of fire and brimstone. There is no drop of water to alleviate pain from the tormenting flames. The Devil shall be tormented day and night. The suffering is unending. There is no pause; there is no rest; there is no comfort. The torment is eternal; it is everlasting; it is day and night without end.

It may be questioned whether or not the lake of fire and brimstone is to be considered in a literal way. Personally we believe that it is not literal fire and brimstone. One reason for so believing is that the Devil is a spirit. This does not in the least lessen the severity of the punishment but actually makes it more intense. Spiritual suffering is more intense and painful than physical suffering. If fire and brimstone are the figures, the reality is worse. One does not soften the anguish and torment by not believing in a literal fire and brimstone. The torment is so horrible that only these figures of speech can describe it. One must remember that the sufferings of the soul of Christ on the cross were more intense than the sufferings of His body. The Devil might well wish that his only suffering was that endured by a body.

Usually the Devil is pictured as ruling over hell and tormenting others. But on the contrary he will be tormented by those whom he deceived and led into hell. It is not difficult to imagine that they will gnash upon him and curse him for his deceptions. How they will hurl at him his first lie: "Ye shall not surely die." They will cast at him his false promise: "Ye shall be as gods." The torment of those whom he deceived will undoubtedly be part of the lake of fire and brimstone.

How deceived indeed has the world been by the Devil since the creation of Adam and Eve. His great aim has ever been to plant doubt in the minds of men concerning the veracity of God's Word. This he started with Eve with the question: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" This way of planting doubt has ever been the method of the great Deceiver. Is Genesis authentic? Was Moses the author of the Pentateuch? Was there a flood? Did David actually write some of the Psalms? Was there only one author of Isaiah? Was Jonah swallowed by a big fish? Did Jesus really perform miracles? What parts of the Gospels are reliable history? What was the real source of Paul's

theology? These are but a few of the thousand questions the Devil has asked in order to implant doubt in the minds of people. What new doubts he will plant in The Great Apostasy only the future will reveal.

And the Devil always seeks to give a false picture of God. He suggested that God was envious of the power mankind would obtain through eating of the forbidden fruit. The God of the Bible has been pictured as crude, as blood-thirsty, as cruel and harsh. What kind of God is the God of revelation who would allow people to suffer? What kind of God is the God of nature who allows earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes? The Devil has ever sought to give a false picture of God throughout all generations. His power is seen in that he convinced some of the angels who dwelt in the presence of God; Adam and Eve who dwelt in the midst of every evidence of God's goodness; and the Israelites who were living in a land flowing with milk and honey. So will he deceive those who are living at the time of the greatest manifestation of millennium blessings.

His special desire is to poison minds concerning Christ. He has set up false Christs. He has implanted doubts concerning the deity of Christ and he has implanted doubts concerning the humanity of Christ. He has acknowledged Him to be a prophet but has denied that He is truly the Son of God. He has taken away from Him a place in the Trinity. The deceptions that Satan has practiced concerning the Christ have been various and manifold.

Millions upon millions have been deceived by the Devil as to the way of salvation. They have been led to put their trust in idols. They have been led to put their trust in human works. They have been led to put their trust in penances, indulgences, and human priests. Mary has been substituted for the Son of God as mediator. Others have been led to put their trust and faith in human wisdom and false philosophy.

What a welcome will the Devil receive from those whom he has deceived! What curses, what vituperation, what abuses, what reviling, what berating will be heaped upon his head. He will be surrounded by a lake of curses. His nostrils cannot escape the stench of vituperation. It is part of his torment day and night. He will be hated, despised, and rejected throughout all eternity.

THE BEAST AND THE FALSE PROPHET

The Devil will find the lake of fire already occupied when he is cast into it. It will be occupied by the Beast and the False Prophet. Some time previous, while the Devil was chained, the Beast and False Prophet were defeated and cast into this terrible lake of fire and brimstone. To identify the Beast and False Prophet we must go back to the previous chapters of Revelation where they are described and their history given.

Revelation 13 to 19 gives a description and history of the Beast and the False Prophet. It is not our purpose to enter into a detailed study as to the identification of these two figures. Needless to say they do not represent any individuals. They embody and represent two anti-Christian forces which persecuted the Christian Church. As we search into history we may say that there were three great persecutions experienced by the Church up to this time. The first was from the Jews which sought to crush the Christian Church in its infancy. The second was pagan Rome which sought to stamp out the Christian faith in the first three centuries. The third was that of papal Rome.

The first persecution which appeared from the moment that Christ was born upon earth is described in Revelation 12 which is that of the Jewish nation. Then in Chapter 13 a beast appears upon the scene. This was the next persecuting power—the pagan Roman Empire. It is described in Revelation 13:2 as being like a leopard, bear, and lion. This points back to the vision of the prophet Daniel in the seventh chapter of his book. He describes four great beasts arising out of the sea. The first was like a lion, the second like a bear, and the third like a leopard. The fourth was the most terrible. This fourth beast of Daniel 7 was the fourth Empire from the time of Daniel. This was the Roman Empire which Daniel states was greater than the three previous empires: Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. This John indicates by stating that this Beast was like a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth that of a lion. That is, the Roman Empire combined the vastness, the power, and the ferociousness of the three previous Empires.

Actually the Roman Empire was the sixth head of the Dragon which had seven heads. The seven heads represent the seven

pagan empires that have opposed themselves to the true God. Although they come at different times on the scene of history yet they are but one beast animated by the same opposition to true religion. This sixth head received a fatal wound. But this deadly wound was healed. The Roman Empire died in the year 476 but was revived again under Charlemagne in 800. It became the main support of the False Prophet or, as it is pictured to us with another figure of speech, the harlot woman seated upon a scarlet colored beast.

The first Beast was defeated by the year 313 when Christianity defeated pagan Rome. The False Prophet was defeated at the time of the Reformation when the papacy received a fatal stroke. We must remember, of course, that in Revelation images are used which do not give us the proper conception of time. For instance, the red dragon with seven heads represents seven empires and covers centuries of time. So when we read in Revelation 19:20 of the defeat of the Beast and the False Prophet we must not take that to mean that it occurred in the matter of a day, month, or year. It covers the course of centuries.

These two enemies were conquered by the word of God. In the description of the battle in Revelation 19 Christ is pictured as having a sword coming out of His mouth. That, of course, is the Gospel as preached by His followers. This is indicated in Revelation 12:11, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony." That is how pagan Rome was overcome. That is how the papacy was defeated during the time of the Reformation. It is by the power of the Gospel that the Beast and the False Prophet were cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.

That there is still a remnant of paganism and papalism in this world is chiefly the fault of the Church. The Word of God is just as powerful in this generation as it was during the early history of the Church. The power of the Gospel is just as strong in this century as in the days of the Reformation. These enemies could be completely vanquished if the Christians of this day and age were as vigorous, as bold, as earnest, as prayerful, and as faithful as Christians were in the first several centuries and in the time of the Reformation.

CHAPTER XIV

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE

Revelation 20:11, *“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.”*

Fire has come down from God out of heaven and devoured the nations. The Devil has been cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. Now is the Day of Judgment. This is the Day concerning which the Scriptures speak so much and concerning which all are warned. This is the Day in which all must give an account of their lives upon earth. It is here called the judgment of The Great White Throne.

The Throne is the great symbol of the sovereignty of God. The sovereignty of God is a sweet doctrine to all who believe. It is wonderful to know that one is under the rule of God and that God is a ruler over all the nations. It is a doctrine that has been denied frequently. To deny the sovereignty of God is part of the sinful rebellion of Satan's followers. Man is the master of his fate, is the doctrine that the unbeliever fain would believe. But the foolishness of that doctrine will especially be seen at the sight of The Great White Throne. God is sovereign and every knee must bow to Him.

The Throne is called Great for it is greater than any earthly throne. It is greater than the throne of the Pharaohs. It is greater than the throne of Nebuchadrezzar, Cyrus, or Artaxerxes. It is greater than the throne of Alexander of Antiochus. It is greater than the throne of the Caesars. It is greater than the throne of France, Germany, or England. Yea, it is greater than all the thrones of earth combined. It is the throne of the King of kings.

The Throne is called Great because of the multitudes to be judged before it. All who ever lived upon earth stand before this great Throne. As we are told in Matthew 25:32, “And before him

shall be gathered all nations.” There are those who maintain that the throne of Matthew 25 and the throne of Revelation 20 are not the same. It is maintained that the first throne concerns the judgment of nations as such. But upon examining the scene described in Matthew 25 we find that it concerns individuals within the nations. Both thrones concern the Judgment after the second coming of the Lord. And all, whether great or small, will stand before it.

The Throne is also called Great because of the issues involved. It will issue into eternal life for some and it will issue into eternal death for others. Some will hear the King saying: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Others will hear the King saying: “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Some will go to the right and others will go to the left of The Great White Throne.

It is the White Throne because it reveals the purity and glory of Him who is seated upon it. Those who stand before this white throne need not fear any miscarriage of justice. He will not judge according to appearances but according to the heart. Even Pharaoh had to acknowledge that the Lord is righteous in His judgments. Pharaoh is revealed as saying in Exodus 9:27, “I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.” And so in the Day of Judgment all will acknowledge the purity of the White Throne.

White is also a symbolical color which reveals glory. The White Throne will reveal the glory of Him who sits upon it. It will be like the glory of the transfiguration: Matt. 17:2, “And he was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.” It will be the throne of glory by the majesty of His royal attendants: “and all the holy angels with him.” It will be a throne of glory for it will vindicate His righteousness. It will be a throne of glory because Christ will be revealed as God-man to whom all judgment has been given. In Him is revealed the Godhead. The throne is white for it is all glorious.

As has already been indicated it is the throne of Christ. He sits upon it, not as the second person of the Trinity, but as God-

man. It is the Son of man as Matthew 25:31 reveals: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." As God the Son He had the right to judge those whom He had created. As God-man He was appointed to be the final judge of the world.

There are a number of passages which indicate the above fact. It is said in John 5:27, "The Father hath given him authority also to exercise judgment, because he is the Son of man." And Acts 10:42, "He is ordained of God to be the judge of the quick and the dead." And again Acts 17:31, "He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." This Jesus Himself claims in John 5:22, 23, 27, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.—And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." As God, Christ does not need authority, ordination, or appointment. But as God-man He does.

This appointment as Judge of the world is the reward of His obedience unto death while upon earth. It is part of His exaltation. This is revealed in Philippians 2:8-11, "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The Great White Throne brings out, of course, the divine nature of our Lord. It brings out His omnipotence. Think of the power that is required to raise the dead bodies and to unite each to its soul! Think of the power that is required to arrange all before His throne! Think of the power that is manifested in separating the sheep from the goats! Think of the power that is required to cast the wicked into hell! Only God has the power to accomplish these things. Christ is God.

His omniscience is also revealed. Open before Him is the life of all that have dwelled upon earth. He is acquainted with every

thought, every word, and every deed of every individual. This wisdom defies the imagination. This omniscience was in evidence even while Christ was upon earth as John testifies in the second chapter of his Gospel: "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." And this will be in evidence at the Day of Judgment when the thoughts of men will be revealed.

NO PLACE FOR EARTH AND HEAVEN

From whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. These words teach us the end and annihilation of the material earth and heaven. They fled away and there was no place for their existence in eternity.

They fled away from the face of Christ. They fled away from the holiness that was manifested. The earth since the fall of man has been contaminated with sin. Thorns and thistles have infested it. It has witnessed murder, adultery, theft, deceit, and covetousness. It has been the scene of strife and battle. And no doubt the sun, the moon, and the stars would blush to witness what they have seen of evil during the course of the centuries. They, too, have been contaminated by the sin of man. As someone has written: "Not only impenitent sinners cannot abide His holiness but the earth upon which they trod; the heavens upon which they gazed." Even as the Israelite could not enter into the sanctuary after he had touched a dead body or an unclean thing even so there is no place for the earth and the heaven through their contact with sin.

This is one of the clearest statements in Scripture of the non-eternity of the earth and the heavens. There are other passages such as Psalm 102:25, 26, "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed." This is also taught in such passages as Isaiah 51:6; 54:10; Matt. 24:35; Luke 21:33; Mark 13:31.

But what about the new heaven and the new earth? Will there not be a renovated material heaven and earth? When the

Scriptures speak of a new heaven and new earth it is not a material concept but a spiritual concept. It is first spoken of in Isaiah 65:17, "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." In its context it cannot refer to the Consummate Kingdom. J. A. Alexander, in his commentary on this verse, writes: "That the words are not inapplicable to a revolution of a moral and spiritual nature, we may learn from Paul's analogous description of the change wrought in conversion (II Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15), and from Peter's application of this very passage, 'Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness' (II Peter 3:13). That the words have such meaning even here, is rendered probable by the last clause, the oblivion of the former state of things being much more naturally connected with moral and spiritual changes than with one of a material nature."

Sometimes Revelation 21:1 is quoted to indicate that there will be a renovated material earth and heavens after the second coming of the Lord. It reads: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." If that is a material concept then Revelation 21:2 must also be a material concept. On this new earth will be a material holy city. This city is a cube of 1400 miles. It has a wall 216 feet high. It contains all the saints whose multitude no man can number yet within the confines of this measured city. The new heavens (sun, moon, and stars) will be somewhat useless to the city for "the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Even the nations outside of it do not need the sun and the moon for they walk in the light of the city. There will be a literal throne for the Lamb and the Infinite God. From that throne will come a literal stream from which the saints will refresh themselves. The literal tree of life will straddle this stream and bear fruit for the saints and healing leaves for the nations.

Just a little reflection will show that to take Revelation 21 and 22 in a literal way is to make utter foolishness of that which John revealed. In that figurative passage you cannot say that the

“new heaven and new earth” is a material concept while the rest is to be taken in a figurative way. The “new heaven and new earth” is but the same as “the holy city” and “the Lamb’s bride.” They just bring out different aspects of the Gospel dispensation.

As far as the material earth and heaven are concerned there is no place for them in the Consummate Kingdom. Revelation is completely silent as to what type of environment will be the enjoyment of the “spiritual body.” Paul says concerning his experience of that other life: “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;), such an one caught up to the third heaven.—How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which is not lawful for a man to utter.” Life in the Consummate Kingdom will be unspeakably glorious but for the revelation of it we must wait until we enter into the other life.

CHAPTER XV

THE BOOKS ARE OPENED

Revelation 20:12, 13, *“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.”*

These verses describe the Final Judgment. It is a scene which defies the imagination. Christ is seated upon the great white throne. He is surrounded by myriads of holy angels. In front of the throne will be gathered all that have ever lived upon the earth. There is not one exception. It is a multitude which no man can number. Small and great will all stand before the the judgment seat of God.

In this description the multitude to be judged are pictured as standing before God. In Matthew 25 where a similar scene is described it is the Son of man seated upon the throne. It is the Lord Jesus Christ in both instances. It cannot be God in His absolute essence. In I Timothy 6:16 it is stated: “Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see.” Finite man cannot comprehend the infinite God. God in His absolute essence dwells in an inaccessible light. But Christ is the image of the invisible God. Therefore Christ stated in John 14:9, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” And in John 12:45, “He that seeth me seeth him that sent me.” To stand before Christ is to stand before God.

Sometimes it is thought that only the wicked dead will stand before the Judgment Seat of God. But it is obvious both from Matthew 25 and the passage before us that those before the throne

consist of the righteous dead and the wicked dead. They are described as "small and great." This is a term which may describe both the righteous and the wicked. Then it is stated: "and another book was opened, which is the book of life." The book of life contained the names of the elect and was needed for the judgment of the righteous. Also it is stated that "the sea gave up the dead which were in it." The sea would contain the bodies of the righteous as well as the bodies of the wicked. There is no reason to doubt that all will stand before the judgment seat of God as is taught in other passages of Scripture (Matthew 16:27; 25:32; Romans 14:10; II Corinthians 5:10; II Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 9:27).

This Final Judgment involves the body as well as the soul of both the righteous and the wicked. This is taught in the words: "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them." This expression conveys the idea that every place where there are any dead, gives them back. The sea giving up the dead indicates the resurrection of the body. Death and Hell (Hades) giving up the dead indicates the soul. Death and Hades are viewed as localities here and in Revelation 1:18 where Jesus states: "I have the keys of hell and of death." That is, Christ is sovereign over all phases of human experience. He is in complete control as to whom death can touch and as to the time when death can reach out towards an individual. Christ has complete control over Hades the abode of departed souls. So at the end of time Christ as supreme ruler and judge summons and the sea will give up the dead. Death and Hades must yield those whom they have swallowed. There is a yielding up of both bodies and souls.

The fall of man damaged both soul and body. The greatest harm was to the soul. The soul died immediately. It was separated from God which is death. The body, however, did not die immediately. That was due to the grace of God. Nevertheless, the sentence of death was upon it. Sooner or later the body dies and gives evidence of the judicial sentence of death. Through Christ it is the soul which recovers first. It is resurrected and restored to fellowship with God. This is the first resurrection. Upon the death of the body the soul of the believer enters into the

intermediate state of heaven. The soul of the unbeliever remains in a dead state and is never restored to fellowship with God. It enters into the abode of the wicked which Christ describes as the place of torment. The bodies of both believers and unbelievers enter into the grave to await the final resurrection.

THE BOOKS OPENED

And the books were opened. We must not understand these as literal books. John speaks in anthropomorphic language, not that God needs any record, but because men do keep such books. It indicates that all things are held in remembrance in the mind of God. This reveals the omniscience of the Lord who knows all things. In judging every individual all things are brought out. There is nothing hid. Because there is such a complete and accurate account of everything that an individual has done there is no room for argument or debate. In the courts of the land there is continual argument as to whether this or that actually happened. But in this Judgment there is an accurate and true record because of the omniscience of the Judge.

The individual will undoubtedly have his memory sharpened in the Day of Judgment. It has been the experience of individuals at time of danger that their lives stand out in bold relief in a few minutes of time. This will be intensified at the time of judgment. The conscience then will be fully awakened. It will not be dull or dead. Forgotten sins will come vividly to mind.

All deeds of the body will be revealed. In II Corinthians 5:10 it is stated: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." One will have to give an account for every word spoken according to Matthew 12:36, 37, "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Not only the deeds and words but the very thoughts of men are recorded and manifested as indicated in I Corinthians 4:5, "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the

hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God." Whatever one has been able to hide from others will be manifested in that day as is written in Romans 2:16, "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." Deeds, words, thoughts, and innermost secrets will stand out in bold relief in that Day of days. What a terror that should be for sinful man!

It is not even a pleasant thought for the Christian to realize that his deeds, words, thoughts, and secrets may be revealed on the Judgment Day. They are, of course, already known to Him concerning whom the Psalmist says: "Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee." But there is a different factor as far as the Christian is concerned which is brought out in the special mention of another book. "And another book was opened, which is the book of life." This book of life records things in a different fashion than the other books.

The wonderful fact is that God does not remember the sins of His elect in the same sense as those of the reprobate. There are many passages in Scripture which teach that God blots out the sin of His people. In Psalm 85:2 it is recorded: "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin." In Psalm 103:12, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." In Isaiah 1:18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." In Isaiah 43:25, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." So also Jeremiah 31:34 and Ezekiel 33:16. All these verses give comfort to the Christian that the Lord does not remember his sinful deeds, words, thoughts, and secrets. It is because these sins have been imputed to another.

It is the Lamb's book of life. The sins of the elect have been imputed to Him and He has erased them by His sacrificial death on Calvary's cross. The garment of life of the Christian has been washed in the blood of Christ. The question is asked in Revelation 7: "What are these which are arrayed in white robes and whence came they?" The answer was: "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

There is a remembrance, however, of the good works performed by the righteous. Malachi 3:16 records: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." And those who bear the name of Christian and have no good deeds, words, and thoughts have deceived themselves as to their standing before God. This the passage of our study calls to our attention twice with the expression: "according to their works."

ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS

Not only in the passage before us but in many other parts of Scripture we are told that the final judgment will be according to works performed. In Matthew 25, for instance, Jesus invites certain ones to enter into the kingdom because they performed such works of charity as feeding the hungry and visiting those in prison. This has puzzled some Christians for they feel that they are justified not by works but by faith in Jesus Christ. Actually the works of the believer give a reason for the sentence but do not express the fundamental cause of the reward received.

We may use this illustration. A man with considerable property makes a free offer to any person for lots on this property. At the end of a certain time he gives formal deeds to those who have accepted his offer because, as he might say: "You have built houses on my property and you have developed the land." Now no one would say that he gave the deeds because of individual merit. He gave the deeds because they gave evidence that they had received his free offer. God of His marvellous grace has given the free offer of forgiveness of sin and eternal life to all who repent and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. A new life and good works issue from the acceptance of this offer. This new life and good works are not the cause but the evidence that people have accepted the free offer of salvation.

This is a protection from the assumption that mere profession of faith in Christ will entitle one to heaven. It must be a *true* profession of faith. Jesus states in Matthew 7: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we

not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." In other words, as He stated just previous to this: "By their fruits ye shall know them." Their fruits are not the meriting cause of salvation but the evidence that they have been truly saved.

On that great Day of Judgment all will appear on the same footing. They will all be judged according to their works. This is true of the believer as well as the unbeliever.

CHAPTER XVI

DEATH AND HADES VANQUISHED

Revelation 20:14, 15, *"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."*

There are two things which confront all mankind: Death and Hades. Death is that experience wherein the soul is separated from the body. Death is viewed by most people as a grim and terrifying reaper. Death still represents the curse of God against sin. This Death is the physical experience which confronts all.

It is unfortunate that in the minds of most people the term "hell" is associated only with the abode of the wicked. The Greek word is *Hades*. In the Biblical sense it is used to designate the invisible realm into which all souls depart. It is the intermediate state of both the righteous and the wicked. The concept of *hades* includes heaven the abode of the righteous and hell the abode of the wicked.

The physical experience of death and the entrance into the abode of *hades* confronts all with the exception of those who are upon earth at the second coming of the Lord. While Death is a terrifying figure for the believer, as it may prove an unpleasant experience for a short time, nevertheless Christ has taken the sting out of death. *Hades* as indicating the intermediate state is a place of delight for the Christian. It is the place where Christ is and into which Paul longed to enter. For the wicked both Death and Hades are terrifying. Of course, through ignorance these two experiences may not seem so terrible. But the actual experience will because death means entrance into the place of torment for the wicked.

Death and Hades are here personified. This is also true in Revelation 6:8, "And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell (*Hades*) followed with

him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth." Here Death is personified as a terrible killer with Hades following as a hearse picking up the dead. And so in our passage Death and Hades are personified and are pictured as two persons being cast into the lake of fire.

Death and Hades are cast into the lake of fire after the general resurrection which takes place at the second coming of Christ. From that time Death and Hades cease to exist for the saint. The resurrected body of the saint will never be confronted with Death. Death has relinquished his hold on the body of the saint and will never have another opportunity to do so. Death, as far as the saint is concerned, is cast forever into the lake of fire. Even so Hades has ceased to exist for him. Hades is the abode of his soul. It is a wonderful place but it is not the place for the fulness of what has been promised. His soul leaves Hades and enters what is indicated in these words of the Lord: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Hope for the redemption of his body (Romans 8:23) has now passed into reality. Hades as the abode for his soul ceases to exist. As useless, it is cast into the lake of fire.

Death and Hades also cease to exist for the wicked. The wicked will not experience Death again in the sense that his soul will be separated from his body. At the general resurrection his body, too, is united with his soul. They will never be separated. As far as he is concerned, Death has been cast into the lake of fire. Even so Hades ceases to exist for him as it was the abode of his soul alone. This present Hades is the place from which his soul will be called. He will enter, body and soul, into the place designated by these words of our Lord in Matthew 25: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." They leave the former Hades and enter into the place which had been especially prepared for the Devil.

What the apostle John has vividly placed before us in the language of symbols the apostle Paul tells us in direct words in I Corinthians 15:26, 54, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.—So when this corruptible shall have put on incorrup-

tion, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." This is also expressed in Isaiah 25:8, "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth." And again it is expressed in Hosea 13:14, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." The truth of these verses John sums up: "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire."

THE SECOND DEATH

No doubt it sounds strange that Death will be cast into the lake of fire and that this is the Second Death. It is because the Second Death swallows up the First Death as the ocean swallows up a river. There are a number of differences between the two. Both are the results of the fall of man in Paradise. Both are the results of sin. Both are because of the sentence: "for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." However, the first death was but the partial fulfillment of that sentence. The second death was the complete fulfillment.

The first Death had its greatest effect on the soul. The soul became dead in trespasses and sin. It was separated from the source of its life—God. There was, however, the possibility of a resurrection. By the grace and power of God some souls experience resurrection. The souls become alive and are restored to communion with God. All possibility of resurrection is ruled out by those who experience the Second Death. That state is final and eternal.

The effect of the First Death upon the body is to destroy it. This it does in a process of time. The body is not immediately destroyed. But the marks of death constantly show. The body becomes weaker through age and disease. Eventually it succumbs and becomes as Paul states corrupt, dishonored, and weak. There is, however, the possibility of resurrection. There is a possibility that the body may become incorruptible, glorious, and powerful. But all possibility of such a resurrection is ruled out by the Second Death. Whatever the state of the body is when united

with the soul, so it remains throughout eternity. It is not a matter of revelation as to just what the state of the resurrected body of the wicked is except that it is a state of torment and misery.

It may also be stated that the effects of the First Death are restrained by God's common grace. No human soul is as evil as it might be. By environment, by civic law, and by direct influence of the Holy Spirit the souls of the wicked are curbed and checked. But in the Second Death there are no restraints or good influences. All is evil. Greed is unrestrained. Hatred is not checked. Envy is not curbed. Deceit holds sway. Strife is ever present. And all these vices and a thousand more bring on their attendant miseries and woes. The unrestrained evils of men and demons is what makes hell such a black pit of torment and agony. That plus the constant remorse which bites into the conscience is what makes the torment of hell. As words fail in the description of eternal bliss so words fail in the description of the Second Death.

THE BOOK OF LIFE

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. This expression does sound as though he who will be cast into the lake of fire is the exception rather than the rule. We are of the opinion that those in the kingdom of light will be more numerous than those who will be in that terrible kingdom of darkness. History so far would not back us up in that opinion. But history is not finished. We do believe that time will come when the knowledge of God will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. The period of the loosing of Satan is short but the period of the millennium is long. We are told that the number of the saints will be as the stars of the heavens and the sand upon the sea shore. It is a multitude without number. Many will be enrolled in the book of life.

This book of life is called the Lamb's book of life in Revelation 13:8 and 21:27. It is the register with the names of those whom God the Father has given to the Son. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me," said Christ. They are the elect. The names in the book of life are those which have been written by God. No man can write his own name upon this register. Only those whose names appear in the book of life can enter into

the Holy City according to Revelation 21:27, "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." This is the book that has been written in heaven.

There is a comforting thought expressed in Revelation 13:8, "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." This speaks of those who worshipped the Beast. The only exceptions to the worship of the Beast at that period were those whose names were written in the Lamb's book of life. They were preserved from this blasphemous worship not by their own power and virtue but because they were the elect of God. God will take care of His elect. Not one will be lost.

By the title of *Lamb's book of life* all saints are reminded that their names are written there because of the sacrificial death of Christ upon the cross. They would have no entrance into heaven if Christ had not died for them on Calvary's cross. God gave Christ a people on the basis of Christ taking upon Himself their sins and guilt. There would not be a heavenly register of names if Christ had not died for His people.

It is a book of life. It is not a register of nominal Christians. It is not a register of dead Christians. The elect prove that they are elect by being living sacrifices unto God. They will manifest that their names are written there by true repentance, a living faith in Christ, and love towards God and man. Peter in his second Epistle speaks of faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity. Then he adds: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." It is by manifesting a Christian life that one is assured that his name is in the book of life.

Thus we come to the end of our study of Revelation Twenty. The Chapter tells us about Satan being bound so that he cannot deceive the nations. It speaks of the lot of the saints during the thousand-year period. It speaks of the first resurrection. Then the Chapter relates of what will occur when Satan is loosed again. It reveals the finish of Satan, Death, and Hades. It brings us

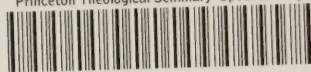
before the Great White Throne. And then it reveals the books which will be opened. It may be fitting to close our study with these words from Luke 10:17-20, "And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."

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